

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE

RIFTS®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®



Inside this 112 page sourcebook...

Rifts® – Chaos Earth® Nebraska

Splicers® – the new House of the Red Sands

Heroes Unlimited™ – a new Villain Organization

Palladium Fantasy RPG® – Wayfarers

Official source material, settings, monsters

News, coming attractions, adventure ideas and more

The battle between good and evil rages.

A.L.
45
HB
44
94
18

Warning!

Violence and the Supernatural

The fictional worlds of Palladium Books® are violent, deadly and filled with supernatural monsters. Other-dimensional beings, often referred to as “demons,” torment, stalk and prey on humans. Other alien life forms, monsters, gods and demigods, as well as magic, insanity, and war are all elements in these books.

Some parents may find the violence, magic and supernatural elements of the games inappropriate for young readers/players. We suggest parental discretion.

Please note that none of us at Palladium Books® condone or encourage the occult, the practice of magic, the use of drugs, or violence.



The Rifter® Number 80

Your Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

Dedication – To Julius Rosenstein – Palladium staffer, Game Master guru, writer and friend. Without Julius there might not have been a Palladium Books. Thank you, my friend, for your many years of dedication to Palladium and for introducing me, and many others to the magic of role-playing. We all owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude.

– Kevin Siembieda, 2018

PDF Edition – June 2019

Copyright 2018 Palladium Books® Inc.

All rights reserved, world wide, under the Universal Copyright Convention. No part of this book may be reproduced in part or whole, in any form or by any means, without permission from the publisher, except for brief quotes for use in reviews. All incidents, situations, institutions, governments and people are fictional and any similarity, without satiric intent, of characters or persons living or dead, is strictly coincidental.

Palladium Books®, Rifts®, The Rifter®, Chaos Earth®, Coalition Wars®, After the Bomb®, Dead Reign®, The Mechanoids®, The Mechanoid Invasion®, Megaverse®, Nightbane®, Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®, Phase World®, Powers Unlimited®, RECON®, and Splicers® are registered trademarks owned and licensed by Kevin Siembieda and Palladium Books Inc.

The slogan “A Megaverse of adventure – limited only by your imagination,” RPG Tactics, and titles and names such as Bizantium and the Northern Islands, Armageddon Unlimited, Aliens Unlimited, Arzno, Atorian Empire, ARCHIE-3, Beyond Arcanum, Beyond the Supernatural, BTS-2, Brodkil, Biomancy, Biomancer, Bio-Wizardry, ‘Burbs, ‘Borg, ‘Bot, Dimensional Outbreak, Dinosaur Swamp, Dyval, Elf-Dwarf War, Heroes Unlimited, I.S.P., Land of the Damned, Lazlo, Victor Lazlo, Lazlo Agency, Lazlo Society, Palladium of Desires, Chi-Town, CS, Coalition States, Cosmo-Knight, Crazy, Cyber-Knight, D-Bee, Dark Day, Dead Boy, Desert Judge, Desert Rose, Doctor Feral, Dog Boy, Dog Pack, Dweomer, Emperor Prosek, Erin Tarn, Fadetown, Free Quebec, Gadgets Unlimited, Gargoyle Empire, Glitter Boy, Gramercy Island, Hardware Unlimited, Heroes of the Megaverse, Heroes Unlimited, HU2, House of Red Sands, Juicer, Ley Line Walker, M.D.C., Mechanoid Space, Mega-Damage, Mega-Hero, Megaversal, MercTown, Minion War, Molok, Morphus, Mutant Underground, Mysteries of Magic, Merc Ops, Naruni, Naruni Enterprises, NEMA, Ninjas & Superspies, NGR, Northern Gun, Nova Hawk, The Nursery, P.P.E., Psi-Stalker, Psyscape, SAMAS, S.D.C., Shifter, Siege on Tolkeen, Skelebot, Skraypers, Sovietski, Splugorth, Splynncryth, Splynn, Techno-Wizard, Temporal Magic, Temporal Wizard, Wayfarers, The Disavowed, Three Galaxies, Tome Grotesque, Triax, Vampire Kingdoms, Warpath: Urban Jungle, Void Runners, Wilk’s, Whispering Field, Wolfen, Wolfen Wars, Wormwood, Wulfen, Xiticix, and other names, titles, slogans, and the likenesses of characters are trademarks owned by Kevin Siembieda and Palladium Books Inc.

Palladium Online www.palladiumbooks.com
Also visit us at facebook.com/PalladiumBooks



The Rifter® #80 is part of an RPG sourcebook series published by Palladium Books Inc., 39074 Webb Court, Westland, MI 48185. Printed in the USA by McNaughton & Gunn of Saline, Michigan.

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER® #80



BRANDT - 97

Sourcebook and Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

Coordinator & Editor in Chief: **Wayne Smith**

Editors: **Alex Marciniszyn**
Kevin Siembieda
Charles Walton II

Contributing Writers:
Daniel Frederick
Julius Rosenstein
Kevin Siembieda
Megan Timperley
Kris Tipping
Charles Walton II

Proofreader: **Julius Rosenstein**

Cover Illustration: **Amy L. Ashbaugh**

Interior Artists:
Amy L. Ashbaugh
Mark Dudley
Michael Mumah
Benjamin Rodriguez

Cover Logo Design: **Steve Edwards**

Credits Page Logo: **Niklas Brandt**

Typesetting & Layout: **Wayne Smith**

Art Direction: **Kevin Siembieda**

Based on the RPG rules, characters,
concepts and Megaverse® created by **Kevin Siembieda**.

Special Thanks to Amy, Ben, Mike and Mark for their artistry, to writers Julius, Kris, Dan, Megan, Chuck, and all our contributors for their bold imaginings brought to life in words and pictures, and to the hardworking Palladium staff. Our apologies to anybody who may have gotten accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

– Kevin Siembieda, July 2018

Contents – The Rifter® #80 – 2018

Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Our subscribers probably think we dropped off the face of the Earth. Sorry about that. The good news is we will be trying to make up for that with more pages and epic adventure source material in **The Rifter®** starting with this issue. Publisher Kevin Siembieda explains what happened, what you can expect in the future and what's coming down the pipeline with books. You are going to like the goodness we have in store for you.

Page 7 – Palladium News

A lot has happened since the last issue of *The Rifter®*. Publisher Kevin Siembieda offers up the latest goings-on and highlights of events over the last several months at Palladium Books. That includes the **2018 Palladium Open House Report** (the POH was a very fun time for us as well as those who attended), the announcement of the **2021 Palladium Open House** (how is that for advance notice), Matt is back, Scott is gone (only sort of), books coming, and fun at Anime North.

Page 10 – Coming Attractions

Books like **Rifts® Sovietski™**, **Nightbane® Dark Designs™** and **Splicers® I Am Legion™** have been released, and a lot more books are coming your way, starting with **Rifts® Bestiary of North America, Vol. One and Two** and issues of *The Rifter®* in rapid succession! **Dead Reign® sourcebook: In the Face of Death**, **Rifts® The Disavowed**, **CS Arsenal** and other fun books to follow. Read all about them all in the coming attractions.

Page 18 – Wayfarers™

– Official O.C.C.s & source material for Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Julius Rosenstein and *Kevin Siembieda* have whipped up a brilliant batch of memorable and fun characters, and ideas for the Palladium Fantasy RPG® setting. **For players**, the Wayfarer™ characters/O.C.C.s and history are a blast to play. **For Game Masters**, the Wayfarers are roguish heroes or thieving bad guys who can be encountered just about *anywhere* in the Palladium World to help or cause a little mayhem. Talk about versatile role-playing game source material. You will never think of thieves the same way after you read the *Swapper's Code* (Julius' idea) and the *Wayfarer Thief* and *Wizard-Thief O.C.C.s*.

Wayfarers are rogues who travel the world in caravans, robbing, beguiling and trading with everyone, from the monster races to humans. They arrive with entertainers, Seers, Psi-Healers, exotic trade goods, rumors, and news. They also bring thieves, con artists and vagabonds, all happy to gamble, cheat and rob people blind.

Page 19 – G.M.s using Wayfarer NPCs

Page 20 – Wayfarers – A nomadic life

Page 20 – Things everyone knows about Wayfarers

Page 20 – Most Wayfarers are Human

Page 21 – Wayfarer Society

Page 21 – Wayfarer Wagons

Page 22 – Wayfarer Confederation

Page 23 – The Caravan Master

Page 24 – The Council of Elders

Page 25 – The Swapper's Code

Page 26 – Language: Wayspeak

Page 26 – Adoption and Family Status

Page 27 – Caravan Disputes

Page 27 – Battle of Champions

Page 27 – Vendetta & Blood Feud

Page 28 – Foreign Relations

Page 29 – Old Kingdom

Page 30 – Wayfarers' Stance on Magic

Page 31 – Wayfarer O.C.C.s

Page 31 – Wayfarer Enforcer

Page 33 – Wayfarer Healer

Page 35 – Wayfarer Peasant/Vagabond

Page 36 – Wayfarer Seer

Page 38 – Wayfarer Teamster

Page 39 – Wayfarer Thief

Page 41 – Wayfarer Wizard Thief

Artwork by *Michael Mumah*.

Page 44 – House of the Red Sands™

– “Official” Setting & Source Material for Splicers®

Kris Tipping, *Charles Walton* and *Kevin Siembieda* join forces to deliver you the first Splicers® Great House in a desert environment. It is a new, mysterious, Splicers House and their unique, new Host Armors, War Mounts, Desert Rose, bio-engineered ants, other creations and adventure ideas.

Page 45 – Words to follow

Page 46 – Geography and Climate

Page 46 – Noteworthy Weather Conditions

Page 47 – Travel

Page 48 – Government & Relationships

Page 48 – How the House Got its Name

Page 49 – Population Breakdown

Page 50 – Dreadguard Template

Page 50 – Dune Viper Host Armor

Page 51 – Thorny Devil Host Armor

Page 53 – Red Sands War Mounts

Page 53 – Desert Judge War Mount

Page 58 – Molok War Mount

Page 60 – Hydrant Ant

Page 62 – Nova Hawk War Mount

Page 65 – War Ant

Page 66 – Eraser Ant

Page 68 – Scarabick Soldier Ant

Page 72 – Desert Rose Mega-War Mount

Page 78 – Template Biotic

Page 78 – Xeric Guard

Page 81 – New Weapons & Enhancements

Page 82 – New Enhancements start

Page 82 – Dry Muscles

Page 83 – Sand Feet

Page 84 – Quick Stats

Page 84 – Notes on The Red Sands Librarians

Art by *Mark Dudley* and *Amy L. Ashbaugh*.

Page 85 – Masters Unlimited™

– Optional source material for *Heroes Unlimited*™

Paul Herbert presents an insidious, new villainous organization, a cadre of notable super-villains within the organization, and adventure ideas galore.

- Page 86 – Potential Masters
- Page 86 – Masters (Current Master)
- Page 87 – Battleship
- Page 88 – Merlock
- Page 88 – Major Powell
- Page 89 – Verdict
- Page 90 – Minions
- Page 93 – Associated Heroes
- Page 94 – Hook, Line and Sinker Adventures

Page 95 – Chaos Earth® Nebraska, Part One

– Official source material for *Chaos Earth*®

Dan Frederick, Megan Timperley and Kevin Siembieda present the new setting of Nebraska. The chaos of the Great Cataclysm is different everywhere. This source material examines the events and survivors of Nebraska, and a few of the weird monsters survivors must deal with. Part One of two.

- Page 95 – Shadows Over Omaha
 - Page 99 – State of Affairs in Nebraska, 2099
 - Page 99 – NEMA
 - Page 100 – Nebraska
 - Page 100 – Offut Air Base
 - Page 100 – Omaha
 - Page 101 – Lincoln
 - Page 103 – “Reaper” Power Armor
 - Page 106 – Nebraska Police Gear
 - Page 107 – Monsters of Nebraska
 - Page 107 – Ash Worm
 - Page 109 – Demon Hopper
 - Page 110 – Undead Fossils
 - Page 111 – Whispering Field
- Artwork by *Benjamin Rodriguez*.

The Theme for this Issue

The theme for **The Rifter**® #80 is new settings for adventure and the unique people you find there. That includes new O.C.C.s for warriors, healers, thieves, mages, heroes, villains and monsters. All fuel to fire up your imaginations and carry you to new realms of adventure. With a new release for *Splicers*® and upcoming books for *Chaos Earth*® and *Fantasy*, we thought it would be fun to present material to support all three settings. Enjoy.

Become a Writer for The Rifter®

We need new writers and artists to fill the next few decades of **The Rifter**®. You do not need to be a professional writer to contribute to **The Rifter**®. This publication is like a “fanzine,” written by fans for fans. A forum in which gamers just like *you* can submit articles, G.M. advice, player tips, house rules, adventures, new magic, new psionics, new super abilities, monsters, villains, high-tech weapons, vehicles, power armor, short works of fiction and more. So think about writing up something short (even something as small as 4-6 pages). Newcomers and regular contributors are always welcome.

The Rifter® needs new material, especially when it comes to adventures and source material, for *all* of our game lines, particularly *Rifts*®, *Chaos Earth*®, *Palladium Fantasy RPG*®, *Heroes Unlimited*™, *Ninjas and Superspies*™, *Beyond the Supernatural*™, *Dead Reign*®, *Splicers*® and *Nightbane*®.

Pay is lousy, fame is dubious, but you see your work in print, get to share your ideas and adventures with fellow gamers, and get four free copies to show to your friends and family.

The Cover

The cover is by **Amy L. Ashbaugh** and depicts the Thorny Devil Host Armor from the House of the Red Sands for *Splicers*®.

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

Most of the material for this issue is “official” source material. As for optional source material, settings and adventures, if they sound cool or fun, use them. If they sound funky, too high-powered or inappropriate for your game, modify them or ignore them completely. We hope all of it ignites your imagination and inspires you to create your own wonders.

www.palladiumbooks.com – Palladium Online

The Rifter® #81

- **Rifts**® source material.
- **Game Master tips** by Greg Diaczyk.
- **Heroes Unlimited**™ source material.
- **Rifts**® **Chaos Earth**® **Nebraska, Part Two**.
- **Palladium Fantasy RPG**® – Gnomes by Hendrik Härtlich.
- **Palladium Fantasy RPG**® adventure by Kevin Siembieda.
- **News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.**
- **112 pages – \$14.99 retail – Cat. No. 181. July/August release.**

One game system, infinite possibilities limited only by your imagination™

The battle between good and evil rages

From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Where do I even begin?

The year started with catastrophe. After proudly carrying the legacy of **Robotech®** in the role-playing games medium for 30 years, our license had expired and would not be renewed.

What happened? To make a very long and painful story short, production of the **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ (RRT)** game line went sideways, production costs soared, shipping costs soared and disaster ensued. We had explored every available option in order to secure more funding or bring in business partners and investors to fund **Robotech® RPG Tactics™**. We solicited multiple quotes and explored different manufacturing options and new production technologies for these potential partners. There was a period when we felt very confident RRT Wave Two would see production and release. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we came up short. But we were so committed, even that did not stop us. We reached out to others. Even Harmony Gold and Palladium's licensing agent tried to help us put deals together with third parties. We made a Herculean effort and did everything we could, right through this past Christmas and into the New Year, but without success.

On February 28, 2018, Palladium announced that despite our best efforts, we were unable to produce the **Robotech® RPG Tactics Wave Two rewards** and simply did not have the financial resources to offer cash refunds for the remaining **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ (RRT) Wave 2** Kickstarter pledges. Palladium offered a refund-in-kind by exchanging existing Wave One product in inventory for the remaining Wave Two rewards.

The response to the Robotech® Reward Exchange Program was overwhelming, but welcomed. Between it and Robotech® liquidation, we were consumed by all things Robotech® for the next two and a half months: March, April and into May. We worked insane hours and through weekends and Easter Sunday, and nearly all of our birthdays, and were still shipping RRT Reward Exchanges the first morning of the Palladium Open House! And we resumed immediately after it.

Moving forward with gusto

Sadly, all good things must come to an end. It is pointless to dwell on the disappointment of RRT. Instead, we are trying to look forward to the future. Palladium is going back to what we all love and know best: creating *role-playing games and sourcebooks, and world building*. We are redoubling our efforts on those fronts and will be working hard to release the many game book titles we have been talking about for some time now.

Since the end of May, Palladium has already released the **Splicers® I Am Legion™ Adventure Sourcebook** (yes, we gathered all the material that appeared in *The Rifter®* #71-78, into one juicy, 256 page sourcebook), the **Rifts® Antarctica™ Raw Preview Edition** (an upcoming World Book for Rifts®), the **Surviving Chaos Earth® Raw Preview Edition** (an advance look at *Chaos Earth® First Responders™* and *Psychic Scream™* sourcebooks), and **The Rifter® #80** in your hands! So we mean business.

What this means for our subscribers to The Rifter® is the rapid release of the next several issues. You have **The Rifter® #80** in your hands and you will be seeing **The Rifter® #81** arrive a couple of weeks later, and **#82** a month or so after that. To help make up for the long delay, we have given issues **#80** and **#81** more pages. So you are getting more content. I apologize for the long delay, but when I say we were consumed by Robotech® I mean we were consumed. No **Rifters®**, no new books other than **Rifts® Sovietski™** (sent to the printer in January), until the recent June releases. But that all changes now. We are getting **The Rifter®** on schedule, and after that, Palladium will be releasing a string of new books that we think you'll love.

What books are next?

The **Rifts® Bestiary™, Volume One** and **Volume Two**. Both feature notable monsters and animals of *Rifts® North America* updated, as well as a number of new monsters and critters to liven up your Rifts® campaigns. There is new information and maps throughout, but there are also more new monsters than we had originally anticipated. That's because our imaginations are working overtime to get you great new books. Followed by more issues of **The Rifter®**, and in no particular order, **Rifts® Antarctica™, First Responders™, The Disavowed™, CS Arsenal™, Dead Reign® In the Face of Death™**, a bunch of **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** books ... lots of good stuff. More details as our schedule tightens up.

This renewed focus and commitment has everyone at Palladium energized. Ideas are flowing like water and we are pounding away on several books while planning many, many others.

That enthusiasm includes Palladium's many freelance writers and artists: *Matthew Clements, Carl Gleba, Brandon Aten, Taylor White, Glen Evans, Greg Diaczyk, Mark Oberle, Charles Walton, John Zeleznik, Mark Dudley, Nick Bradshaw, Ben Rodriguez, Mike Mumah, Amy Ashbaugh, and others*. All reenergized and working away on multiple projects. There are some new faces coming your way too.

Our goal, to set your imaginations on fire by releasing book after book that wows, pushes the envelope and blows your minds.

We intend to support *all of our game lines*, but our focus over the next few years will be on what we've decided will be our big four game lines: **Rifts®, Heroes Unlimited™, Palladium Fantasy®** and **Beyond the Supernatural™**. Yes, BTS will be getting the attention it deserves.

The handful of people who have heard some of our plans for these games line have been floored. Jaws have dropped. Cheers and expressions of gratitude have been exclaimed. We are pleased to see the level of excitement from them and from our fans, because that motivates us all the more.

We are galvanized, focused and dedicated to revitalizing the Palladium game worlds you know and love, and introduce you to some new worlds.

So sit back, enjoy the many new releases coming your way, and please keep those imaginations burning bright.

– Kevin Siembieda, Publisher & Writer, July 2018

Palladium News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know



2018 Palladium Open House was a hit with the fans

The Palladium Open House, held April 19-22, 2018, saw 200+ fans, friends and creators from across the United States, Canada, and around the world enjoy a long weekend of Palladium gaming with the people who create the games they love. See the **2018 Palladium Open House Report** at the end of this News section for highlights. It is reprinted from our online, Weekly Update, for your reading pleasure.

2021 Palladium Open House

We are already planning for a 2021 Open House to celebrate Palladium Books' *40th Anniversary*. A number of people were disappointed because they did not have enough time to plan for the 2018 POH between the short notice and the dates for the actual event.

Well, because we intend to make the 2021 event the biggest, best Open House ever, we are giving you all plenty of advance notice! Start making your plans now for an extravaganza nobody will want to miss.

FYI: Several people suggested the 2021 40th Anniversary celebration as the date for the next Palladium Open House, which is why we decided to do it, but *Joseph Bergmans* was the very first. I loved the idea from the get go, and so did Kathy and the staff. One more thing to look forward to from Palladium Books.

Gen Con – Indianapolis, Indiana – August, 2018

Gen Con is just around the corner. We look forward to seeing many Palladium fans there. Of course, we will bring a bunch o' books for ALL game lines, new and old, including the Raw Preview Editions, new releases, The Rifter, some T-shirts, prints, original art, out of print collectibles and maybe a surprise or two.

- Meet a number of Palladium creators and get books signed by characters like:
 - Kevin Siembieda, Writer and Game Designer
 - Carmen Bellaire, Writer and Game Designer
 - Brandon Aten, Writer and Game Designer
 - Wayne Smith, Editor, Rifter®
 - Mark Oberle, Writer
 - Glen Evans, Writer
 - Charles Walton II, Artist
- Please join the fun and swing by to say hello and chat.

Writer Matthew Clements returns to Palladium Books

The writer who brought you **Rifts® Northern Gun™ 1 & 2**, **Dead Reign® Fear the Reaper™** and **Graveyard Earth™**, as well as contributed to many other books, including the expanded **Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™** and **Vampires Sourcebook**, among other titles, is back writing and editing books for Palladium. And several other freelance writers are pumped up and working away to help us get books released.

Coming! Finally!

Chaos Earth® First Responders

We want to get you some of those books you have been waiting for. **Chaos Earth® First Responders™** is one of them. We even had a real-life first responder and writer take a look at the **Chaos Earth® First Responders™** manuscript for feedback and additions to this long awaited book.

Coming!

Chaos Earth® Psychic Scream™

Writer *Taylor White* (**Chaos Earth® Resurrection™** and **Hell Followed™**) recently turned in a **Chaos Earth®** manuscript entitled **Psychic Scream™** that I hope to see released this autumn or winter.

Note: We have made it and **Chaos Earth® First Responders™** available as **Raw Preview Editions** – but we are not offering them via mail order until we know if there are any left after Gen Con. Probably not. Sorry.

For those of you who don't know what a **Raw Preview Edition** is, it is an advance copy of the *unedited, unfinished, unillustrated, working manuscript* for an upcoming sourcebook. It is always limited to around 150 copies, making it something of a limited edition collector's item. The cool thing about it is that a **Raw Preview Edition** enables those who see it to get an idea of what's coming months before the book is released, and can compare the two later to see what was added, deleted and changed. A nice reference for those who hope to write sourcebooks themselves.

Palladium has done about a half-dozen Raw Previews in the past, but we had numerous requests at the Palladium Open House for us to do more of them. We aim to please, so we are doing more. The next **Raw Preview Edition** is likely to be *Greg Diczuk's* proposed **Hardware Unlimited™** manuscript in time for Gen Con.

Writers at work

As mentioned in **From the Desk of ...** there are a host of writers who are already working on upcoming and future books. I can tell you that *Glen Evans*, *Carl Gleba*, *Matthew Clements*, *Steve Dawes*, *Greg Diaczyk* and others are busy writing or plotting their next project or two. Very exciting as we plan to roll out a number of new releases this year and next.

Scott Gibbons' departure

Scott Gibbons has had to step away from Palladium Books due largely to family concerns. As many of you know from interactions with him online or at the recent Palladium Open House, his oldest child was diagnosed with cancer five years ago. Last year, shortly before he started working with Palladium, Scott's son began a new treatment that brought very promising results. Unfortunately, a few months ago the cancer reasserted itself, and Scott and his family are now having to devote more time and energy to his son's care. While the long-term prognosis hasn't changed, the stress and demands prevent Scott from being able to devote the attention and energy toward his work at Palladium as he would like to provide.

Scott remains a friend and confidant, so don't be surprised to see his name cropping up in news, books and other projects. We wish Scott and his family our very best, and hope the doctors find a new, superior treatment regimen with lasting results for his son. Hang tough.

Robotech® Discontinued

Palladium Books is no longer producing or selling **Robotech®** role-playing games or game pieces. Our license is over and we are focusing on other game lines. Of course, that doesn't mean you can't continue to create your own new, Robotech® RPG adventures with the books you have. That's the beauty of role-playing games, you are only limited by your imagination. Game on!

2018 Palladium Open House Report

Westland, Michigan – April 19-22, 2018

Note: This POH Report first appeared online in a Weekly Update. It is written from my – *Kevin Siembieda's* – point of view.

The Palladium Open House was awesome ... as usual. Everyone seemed to have a great time. That has as much to do with the many wonderful gamers who attended as it does with anything we do. The Palladium crew was pretty exhausted going into the Palladium Open House from the start, especially the unshakable *Kathy Simmons* and myself.

The entire Palladium crew had been processing, packing and shipping **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ (RRT) Reward Exchanges** since February 28, 2018, almost non-stop and to the exclusion of all else. And I mean long, 10-16 hour days, seven days a week. We even shipped RRT rewards right up till the Open House, including the morning of the VIP night. I would like to think our exhaustion didn't show too badly throughout the POH. A lot of people said I looked perfectly fine on Thursday VIP night, which I'm grateful for, but I was so tired, I had trouble remembering the names of my staff. Something freelance writer and pal, *Brandon Aten* enjoyed teasing me about, lol.

That evening I talked with many people in attendance, signed books, and after my panel talk, managed to sneak out around 10:30 PM to get seven hours of sleep.

Thankfully, *Scott Gibbons*, *Gwen Gibbons* and our many helpers, G.M.s, and freelancers were fresh, sharp and helped out immensely. *James Brown*, *Diane Brown*, *Matthew Treml*, *Joe Bergmans* and *Chris Guertin's* help bordered on the Herculean and we could not have done this Open House without them. *Doug Lamberson*, *Tina Simmons*, *Mike Silva*, *Glen Evans* and *Connor Brown* were also a big help and a lot of other people chipped in to lend a hand throughout the event. Thank you, one and all.

Scott Gibbons arrived about five days before the Open House, and *Matthew Treml* from England, and the *Brown family* 2-3 days prior. They all proved to be a tremendous help. I was happy to show Matthew a bit of Detroit when he accompanied me to get the four new Palladium T-shirts (described later in this update). And he even got to glimpse Canada from across the Detroit river, commenting that he didn't realize Canada (Windsor) was so close to Detroit. Yep, we are neighbors across the river.

I was firing on all cylinders (okay, most cylinders), fueled by an adrenaline high on Friday and Saturday. I was feeling great – empowered by the positive energy from everyone there – and ran three games each day, plus a couple of panel talks. It was great seeing old friends and making many new ones. It is funny how instantly connected we all felt seeing friends and fans we had not seen in three years or longer. The POH really is like a family reunion with people you are eager to see again. As usual, many people commented on how welcomed they felt, and how friendly and grounded everyone is at Palladium; from me and the staff to our many freelancers. We are just game nerds happy to see our fellow gamers and spend time with you. I think that's instantly obvious to anyone who attends a Palladium Open House.

Speaking of which, I was thrilled to see *Matt Treml* from the UK and shocked to see my wonderful friend and writer *Hendrik Härterich*, from Germany. In fact, one of the nice, rare quiet moments for me, personally, was being able to go to dinner Wednesday night with Hendrik and freelance writer *Dan Frederick*, from Northern California. What did we talk about? Games and the art and joy of writing role-playing games, of course. Like I said, the POH is a nerdfest.

I was also surprised and delighted to see writer *Josh Sinspaugh* (if I knew he was coming, I forgot), and it was also great to see writers and friends *Matthew Clements*, *Carl Gleba*, *Jason Richards*, *Taylor White*, *Brandon* and *Sarah Aten*, *Mark Oberle*, *Greg Diaczyk* and his boys (*Caleb*, *Joshua*, and *Noah* who also lent a hand), *Glen Evans*, *Steve Dawes*, and *Matthew Balent*. Artists *Apollo Okamura*, *Amy L. Ashbaugh*, *Mike Mumah*, *Mark Dudley*, *Madman Mike Leonard*, *Ben Rodriguez*, *Roger Cartier*, *Chuck Walton* and others were also present, along with the Palladium staff. I was pleased that *Carmen* and *Christina Bellaire* and *Paul Deckert* were able to pop in on Sunday. Sadly, my presence was in such demand I did not get much of a chance to hang out with these amazingly talented creators. In most cases it was a handshake or hug hello and goodbye, and maybe a 5-10 minute chat here and there.

The sound level was more manageable thanks to Scott's research about "moving blankets" used to muffle sound. We hung approximately 80 of these cheap, light, gray blankets all over the pallets to muffle sound, and it worked.

Jodi, the good guy behind YouTube's **Questwise** series, came down to enjoy the Palladium Open House and squeezed in a number of video interviews with Palladium creators. I imagine you will be able to catch them on **Questwise** in the weeks ahead. You can check out this fun RPG program at:

<https://youtu.be/BQITnSgghwQ>

The live auction is always a lot of fun, and we had a large number of participants snagging a number of unique collectibles that included old Palladium T-shirts and jackets, RPG books, a couple of gold editions, proofreader copies, and other good stuff. *Gwen Gibbons* had suggested a couple of fun ideas. One was to auction off three sets of dice I had used during my POH game events. The idea being that positive G.M. energy would be infused into them. One auction winner even had me initial each die. Another idea was to auction off a dozen unique, one-time-use *Megaverse® Certificates* that let a player do something special (provided the G.M. allows it). This included things like +3 on any one die roll, the ability to make one re-roll, and other good stuff. All were well received and invoked laughter, ooohs and ahhs.

Games. As far as I know, the gaming was generally outstanding, but then we have many outstanding Game Masters that include *James Brown* (who came in at 7:00 AM Saturday morning to set up and run a game for 4-5 gamers who missed out on his Archie Three game; talk about dedication on everyone's part), *Carl Gleba*, *Peter Pidrak*, *Cameron Cleveland*, *Levi Johnstone*, *Brandon Aten*, *Greg Diaczyk*, *Julius Rosenstein*, *myself* and many, many others. My thanks to each and every one of our Game Masters. Great job. The building was filled with laughter and excitement.

My seven games went off very well and everyone had a blast, myself among them. I ran two **Lord De Silca** Palladium Fantasy RPG games, three Fantasy games involving Wolfen being turned into vampires and a plot to enslave the world, and two **Dead Reign®** games involving a possible cure for the zombie plague. I will try to talk about the specifics of some of the games in another Update or perhaps *Murmur* from the *Megaverse®*, but I do want to mention that for the first time in 30+ years, a player asked what was the name of De Silca's kingdom. I had never named it, I said. Another player suggested I name it after the player who asked. I liked that idea, so it is now and forever the *Kingdom of Fundinger*. There *Jamie*, it's official. I also want to give a shout out to everyone who played a Warlock or the Goblin Cobbler in my fantasy games – you guys rocked. I saw a lot of outstanding role-playing and teamwork in these games.

I enjoyed a wonderful time gaming, hanging out and speaking with the 200+ folks from all round the USA, Canada, and beyond. Too much fun, much too late Saturday. As a result, I was toast on Sunday, but still managed to pull together a solid Fantasy game (the group was battling Wolfen Vampires). That game went nearly two hours longer than scheduled and was very different than the two previous games I had run. The players loved it (as did I), which is all that matters. By Sunday's closing ceremonies, however, my brain was mush, but it was a good mush. We all had a great time, with plenty of nice moments, lots of laughs, handshakes, hugs and photographs. My thanks to *Michael Nauta* for the awesome iron back-scratcher he forged, and every one of you who made the 2018 Open House a joy for us.

I also want to give a shout out to *Jesse Zoiney* – stay strong and keep smiling. Your smiling face, excellent role-playing and

kindness was one of my personal highlights at the Open House. (I had tried to email you, but the address you gave me bounced.) It was also wonderful seeing *Jon* and *Colleen*, *James*, *Mark*, *Jesse*, *Destiny*, *Shara*, *Kelly* and that entire crew, and ... well ... EVERYONE who attended.

I hope everyone had as wonderful a time as we did. My apologies if I didn't mention someone whom I probably should have. (Hey, *Juan*, *Jake*, *Peter*, *James*, *Mark*, *Jesse*, *Kenny*, *John*, *Lynn*, *Andrew*, *Andy F.*, *Anthony*, *Shannon*, *Justin*, *Markus*, *Zander*, *Laura*, *Ian*, *Dan*, *Andrew*, *Mike*, *Chris*, *Patrick*, *Ryan*, *Belle*, and *Michael*, not to mention *Elizabeth Gibbons*, *Nathan Ellis* and *Irene Hartman*.)

The next Palladium Open House is April, 2021. It will be Palladium's 40th Anniversary and we hope to see more of you than ever before for this landmark moment. We're already making plans now so it should be the most organized POH in years.

Anime North Report

Chuck Walton and I spent the Memorial Day weekend in Toronto, Canada, at **Anime North** where we were guests. There we met up with our friends *Todd Spencley*, *Apollo Okamura* (artist), *Greg Diaczyk* (writer) and his family (wife *Jennifer*, his boys, *Caleb*, *Josh*, and *Noah*, and *Harry*, his father), *Braden Campbell* (writer) and his family (*Holly* and *Annachie*), as well as a number of Palladium fans and show runners. As usual, there were thousands upon thousands of amazing cosplay costumes, and waaaaay too many cool things to see and do. One highlight was *Todd* treating us to the movies where we saw and enjoyed *Solo*, *A Star Wars Story*. Another was Saturday night dinner with *Todd*, *Apollo*, *Greg* and *Jennifer*. It was nice to actually have time to spend with friends, old and new. It was also a treat to finally meet *Holly Campbell*, in person, a very nice lady, and just getting to spend time with these nice people and the many wonderful fans from across Canada, as well as a few fellow Americans. Spoke with some potential new artists, too.

I had intended to run a couple of **Beyond the Supernatural™ (BTS)** games and a **Palladium Fantasy** game, but the ambient noise in the gaming hall was so loud (hey, Anime North gets something like 35,000+ people!), I did not think I could hear well enough to run a quality game. The next time we attend Anime North we may try to acquire a quiet space to run games as well as to do panel talks like *How to Design Creatures*, *World Building* and *The Art of Role-Playing*. Not sure if we'll be back in 2019 or wait a year and return in 2020. Probably the latter, especially since we have so many games and sourcebooks on the drawing board.

Ideas for books were flowing. The four and a half hour ride up to Anime North and back again, gave *Chuck* and me time to spitball plenty of ideas and plans for **Rifts®**, **Heroes Unlimited™** and **Beyond the Supernatural™**. The ideas were flying fast and furious. Subjects included various monsters, magic, super beings, new world settings and environments, ley lines, Rifts and Ley Line Walkers, among other things. *Chuck* has been sketching away ever since we got back, and I've been jotting down notes and ideas in between working on the **Rifts® Bestiary™**, **Volumes One and Two**. I have also been in communication with several freelance artists and writers about projects they are writing and/or contributing to.

Coming Attractions

Palladium's 2018 Release Checklist

Available Now

- New! **Splicers® I Am Legion™ sourcebook** – 256 pages.
- New! **Rifts® Sovietski™ World Book** – 224 pages.
- New! **Nightbane® Dark Designs™ sourcebook** – 160 pages.
- **Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans™** – 224 pages, epic.
- **Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans™ Gold Hardcover** – 224 pages.
- New! **The Rifter® #80** – 112 pages.
- **The Rifter® #79** – 96 pages.
- New! **Raw Preview Edition: Rifts® Antarctica™**
- New! **Raw Preview Edition: Rifts® Surviving Chaos Earth®**

Note: The Raw Previews are limited editions available only from Palladium Books. They are not available in stores.

Coming Soon

- **The Rifter® #81** – 112 pages – July/August, in production.
- **The Rifter® #82** – 96 pages – August/September, in production.
- **Rifts® Bestiary™ of North America, Vol. 1** – Summer, in production.
- **Rifts® Bestiary™ of North America, Vol. 2** – Summer/Fall
- **Dead Reign® Sourcebook: In the Face of Death™** – Fall
- **Rifts® Chaos Earth® First Responders™** – Fall/Winter
- **Chaos Earth® Psychic Scream™** – Fall/Winter
- **Rifts® Antarctica** – Fall/Winter

Also on the drawing board for 2018

- **Rifts® The Disavowed™ Sourcebook** by Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements.
- **Rifts® Heroes of Humanity™ CS Arsenal**
- **Garden of the Gods™, Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook** by Siembieda
- **Lopan™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Adventure Sourcebook**
- **Lopanic Games™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook**
- **Hardware Unlimited™, a Heroes Unlimited™ Sourcebook**
- **Heroes Unlimited™ Sourcebooks**
- **Splicers® Sourcebooks**
- **Nightbane® Sourcebook**
- **Beyond the Supernatural™ Sourcebooks**
- **And more.** Other titles are in the pipeline and being written. Thus additional and other titles may be slotted into the release schedule.

Palladium RPGs are available in many hobby and game stores around the world. We encourage people to support their local stores. Going to a store enables you to see the product before purchasing it, and many stores are happy to place special orders for you, provided you pay in advance, enabling you to avoid the cost of shipping and possible damage in the mail.

Ordering from Palladium Books: You can also order directly from Palladium Books, but you will pay extra for shipping. For customers with access to a computer, we highly recommend ordering online. This provides you with information about the most recent releases and Palladium's entire product catalog. It also provides you the most accurate shipping costs and more shipping options. You can also order by telephone; 734-721-2903 (order

line only). For customers without such access, use the following "mail order" process.

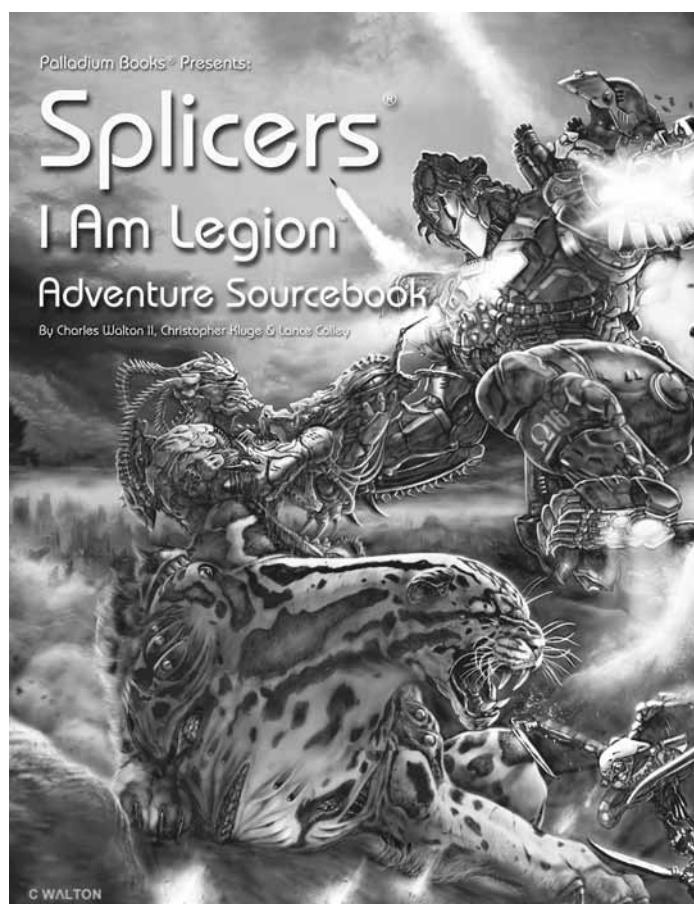
1. Send the cost of the books or items being ordered.

2. **In the USA:** Add \$6 for orders totaling \$1-\$50 to cover shipping and handling. Add \$12 for orders totaling \$51-\$95. Add \$18 for orders totaling \$96-\$200. **Note:** For non-book products, including T-shirts, add an extra \$6 per \$50 worth of product, on top of the shipping amounts listed above. This is because non-book products cannot ship via Media Mail, and must use a more expensive method of shipping. **Outside the USA:** Double the shipping amount for orders going to Canada, and quadruple it for overseas orders. Any and all additional costs incurred as a result of customs fees and taxes are the responsibility of the foreign customer, NOT Palladium Books.

3. Make checks or money orders payable to *Palladium Books*.

4. Please make sure to send us your complete and correct address, including apartment number. **Note:** These costs are for the least expensive and slowest method of shipping only. Allow 2-4 weeks for delivery. Order online or call the office for a superior but more costly shipping method.

New & Coming Soon



NEW! Splicers®:

I Am Legion™ Adventure Sourcebook

Splicers® is a dark world of the future where a nano-plague has made touching metal deadly and humans are forced to use genetically engineered, living weapons and organic war machines

to battle N.E.X.U.S., an insane Artificial Intelligence and her legion of robots and monstrosities.

This big, 256 page adventure sourcebook for **Splicers®** is jam-packed with new Host Armors, War Mounts, Bio-Enhancements and adventure galore. Your heroes must uncover the mad schemes of the new N.E.X.U.S. personality that calls herself Legion. Then battle her army of robots and Amalgams every step of the way. If you fail, thousands will die. Collects the adventure source material from The Rifter® issues #71-78 and looks great.

Highlights Include:

- 6 new Great Houses.
- 4 new Host Armors.
- 6 new Splicers War Mounts.
- 7 new Bio-Enhancements and augmentation.
- 19 new Bio-Weapons, including the Hive Sword, Bug Bombs and more.
- 15 new machines – robots and amalgams of the murderous Legion.
- Amalgam creation tables, new alien predators and more.
- Legion: A new and psychotic personality of N.E.X.U.S., statted and described.
- Includes 20 pages of additional, unpublished material.
- An epic series of adventures, plus adventure ideas and more.
- Written by Chuck Walton II, Christopher Kluge, Lance Colley and others.
- 256 pages – Cat. No. 201 – \$26.99 retail – Available now.

New! World Book 36:

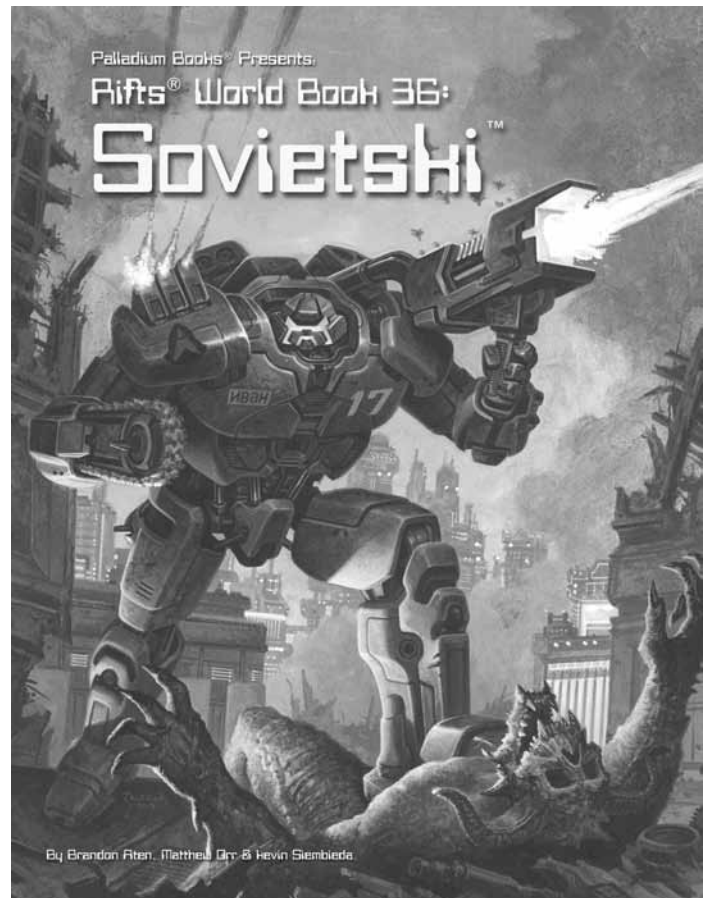
Rifts® Sovietski™

Rifts® Sovietski™ is jam-packed with a wide array of source material. New cyborgs, new O.C.C.s, new skills, new D-Bees, new cyborgs and bionics, new weapons, new vehicles, underground bunker tables, tons of adventure ideas and a whole lot of fun.

The Sovietski faces danger from the high-tech but savage and ruthless Warlords of Russia, the expanding Brodkil invasion sponsored by *Mindwerks* and *the Angel of Death*, Werewolves in the north, Gargoyles spilling in from the west, and the coming of the Minion War.

Rifts® Sovietski™ is a treasure trove of new ideas for cyborgs, player characters, D-Bees, and the fledgling Sovietski nation. This book brings the Russian landscape to life and ready for adventure. See how the Sovietski came into being and where it is going, learn about its soldiers, army, people and their dreams, beliefs, and politics, plus Dead Zones, Spetsnaz Intelligence force, new cyborgs, bionics, and more. When combined with the **Rifts® Mindwerks™ Sourcebook**, **Warlords of Russia™**, **Mystic Russia™** and the **Triax™** books, you have a setting as large as North America.

- 9 Sovietski O.C.C.s.
- 40+ M.O.S. Skill Packages and 4 unique D-Bees.
- 11 unique new Cyborgs, plus new bionics and body armor.
- Light, Heavy and Superheavy Machines (cyborgs), revisited.
- Cyborg animals for scouting and combat – new concept.



- Sovietski war machine – 18 new vehicles, tanks, aircraft, and more.
- 16 unique weapons plus grenades, tank shells and special ammunition.
- Spetsnaz Sovietski Special Forces – the new KGB.
- Bunker creation tables and Dead Zone tables.
- Soldier Motivation/Origins, new skills and other tables.
- Russian D-Bees like Wolverine People and the elemental Yaganar.
- Overview of the Sovietski, notable cities and places of interest.
- Notable groups, enclaves, people, many adventure ideas and more.
- Written by Brandon Aten, Matthew Orr and Kevin Siembieda.
- 224 pages – \$26.95 retail – Cat. No. 891. Available now.

Other Rifts® titles for Russian or Eastern European Campaigns:

- **Rifts® Warlords of Russia™** – Overview of Russia, the Warlords and their legions of cyborg warriors, the Sovietski, 20 O.C.C.s, 20 Cyborgs, Russian weapons, vehicles, and more. 224 pages. Cat. No. 832, \$24.95 retail.
- **Rifts® Mystic Russia™** – 18 Archaic Russian Demons, 10 monsters, Night Witch, Hidden Witch, Mystic Kuznya, Fire Sorcerer, 9 Gypsy O.C.C.s, Russian magic, 6 vehicles, and more. 176 pages. Cat. No. 833, \$20.95 retail.
- **Rifts® Sourcebook 3: Mindwerks™** – The techno-horrors of the Angels of Death and Vengeance, 27 monsters and D-Bees of Eastern Europe, Mindwerks™ weapons, robots, MOM Implants, Brodkil, Gene Splicers, the Kingdom of Tarnow, the

Black Forest, maps and more. 112 pages. Cat. No. 812, \$17.99 retail.

- **Rifts® Triax & NGR™** – The New German Republic vs the Gargoyle Empire, 16 O.C.C.s, 20 vehicles, 15 robots, 9 cyborgs, plus power armor, body armor, weapons, overview of Europe, maps and more. 224 pages. Cat. No. 810, \$24.95 retail.
- **Rifts® Triax™ 2** – More about the NGR, the Gargoyle and Brodkil Empires, and the rest of the NGR war machine: Triax robots, power armor, vehicles, aircraft, and weapons galore. 192 pages. Cat. No. 881, \$26.99 retail.
- **Rifts® Game Master Guide™** – Every Rifts® robot, power armor, vehicle, weapon, experience table, map, and more that appeared in World Books 1-23 and Sourcebooks 1-4, plus O.C.C. and R.C.C. index, rules clarifications, and more. 352 pages. Cat. No. 845, \$26.95 retail.
- **Rifts® Book of Magic™** – 900+ magic spells, plus Techno-Wizard devices, Magic Tattoos, Nazca Lines, Whale Songs, Herbs, Symbiotes, Bio-Wizard Weapons, Rune Weapons, magic items and more! 352 pages. Cat. No. 848, \$26.95 retail.
- **Rifts® Adventure Guide™** – 150+ adventure ideas, Random Rifts, making towns, cities, merc companies, and traveling shows, gaming tips and much more. 192 pages. Cat. No. 849, \$24.95 retail.
- **Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames™** – Rifts Earth has been invaded by the minions of two Hells. Demon Plagues, 14 Hell Lords, Hell Pits, Calgary Kingdom of Monsters, adventure and more. 192 pages. Cat. No. 876, \$24.95 retail.

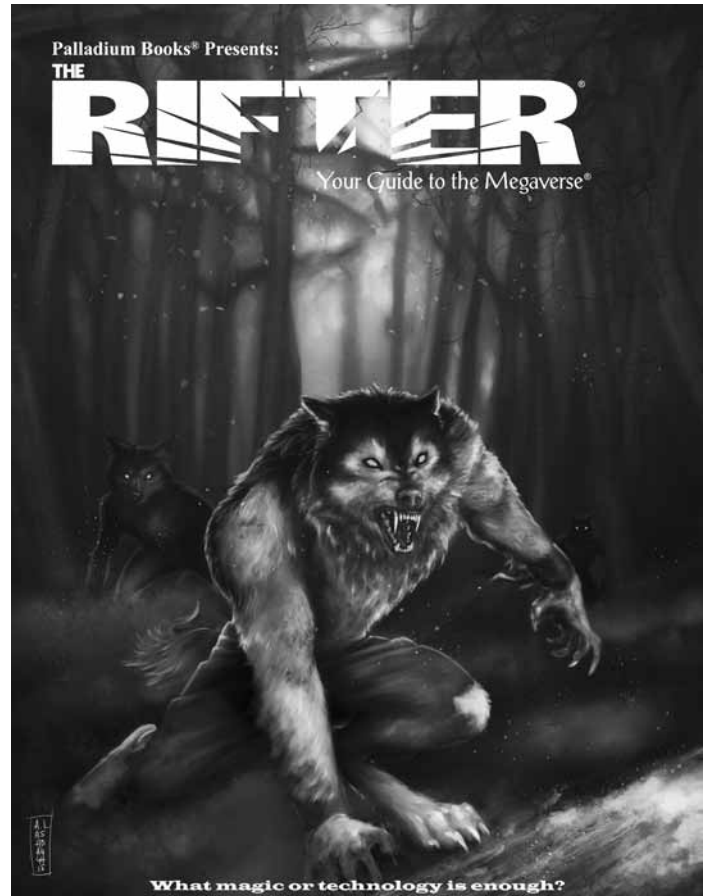


New! Nightbane® Dark Designs™

This is another title that people are enjoying and is available now. **Nightbane® Dark Designs™** is a guide to creating the Nightbane and a sourcebook for *players* and *Game Masters* alike. It presents all sorts of new Nightbane creation tables, new Morphus tables, new Talents, and new information. Info and powers that enable players to make memorable Nightbane characters and G.M.s to take their games up a notch.

- **18 new and comprehensive Morphus Tables.**
- **60 new Common Talents.**
- **38 new Elite Talents.**
- **Transformation Transition Table.**

- **Talent creation and conversion rules.**
- **Ancient Nightbane R.C.C. fully statted out and creation tables.**
- **Insight to the Becoming.**
- **Answers to some common questions & more.**
- **Appendix of 23 Morphus Tables gathered from the Nightbane® RPG and Sourcebooks.**
- **Appendix of 53 Talents gathered from the Nightbane® RPG and Sourcebooks.**
- **Written by Mark Oberle. Cover by Charles Walton II and Eduardo Dominguez.**
- **\$20.95 – 160 pages – Cat. No. 736 – Available now.**



NEW! The Rifter® #81

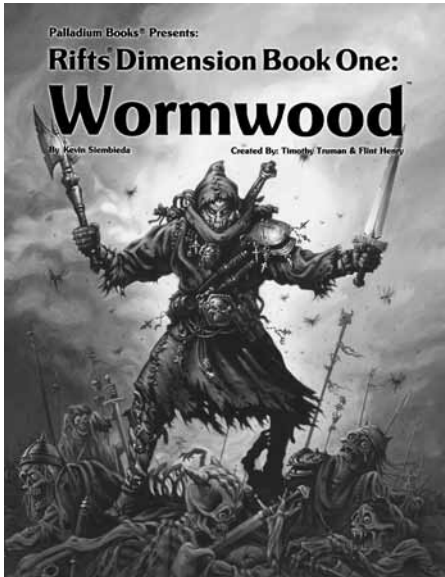
– Ships End of July!

That's right, **The Rifter® #81** is already in production. Articles have been selected and artwork is assigned.

Every issue of The Rifter® is an idea factory for players and Game Masters to generate new ideas and find new avenues of adventure. It provides useful, ready to go source material you can just drop into your ongoing games. A doorway to new possibilities and numerous Palladium role-playing worlds. And the many new characters, O.C.C.s, powers, magic, weapons, villains, monsters, adventures and ideas for one setting can be easily adapted to *any* Palladium setting. Every issue has material for **Rifts®** and usually 2-3 other Palladium game lines. The focus of this issue is **Rifts®, Splicers®** and RPG advice. Don't forget, unofficial material can be easily adapted for use in ANY Palladium game setting.

Rifter® #81 Highlights:

- Rifts® source material.
- Game Master tips by Greg Diaczyk.
- Heroes Unlimited™ source material.
- Palladium Fantasy RPG® – Gnomes by Hendrik Härt-erich.
- Palladium Fantasy RPG® adventure by Kevin Siembieda.
- News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.
- 112 pages – \$14.99 retail – Cat. No. 181. July/August re-lease.



Back in Stock:

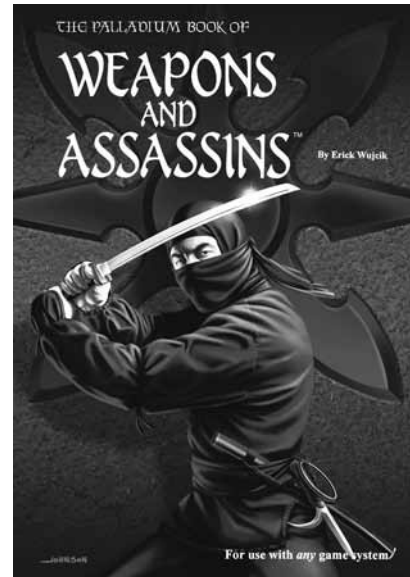
Wormwood™

Rifts® Dimension Book™ One

Wormwood is a mysterious living planet of unknown origin and purpose. It is presumed to be some sort of colony world and supports human life, but under the strangest conditions. It might be an idyllic environment if not for the corrupting “infections” that are the Unholy and his minions – demonic and monstrous creatures who battle for domination of the planet and its inhabitants. So it is that humans and monsters, the good and the wicked are at constant war with one another. Epic adventure, horror and the supernatural. There is nothing quite like Wormwood in the Megaverse®.

- **The Good and the human are represented by the Cathedral. Its Champions of Light include warrior priests, monks, Wormspeakers (seers), Symbiotic Warriors, Knights of the Temple, Holy Terrors and the most powerful and heroic of them all, the legendary Apok.**
- **The Wicked and the demonic are represented by the Unholy, Dark Priests and the demonic Dark Minions.**
- **Home of Crawling Towers, Holy Terrors, Wormspeakers, Apoks the Avengers, and hordes of demonic monsters.**
- **37 unique Wormwood spells.**
- **50 symbiotic organisms; worms, claws, crawlers, stars and more.**
- **Magical Blood Stones and crystals.**
- **16 Dark Minions, including Entrancers, Skelter Bats and Worm Zombies.**
- **8 Player O.C.C.s, 20 monsters, a world of adventure unlike any other.**

- **20 page comic strip by Timothy Truman and Flint Henry.**
- **Created by comic book legends *Timothy Truman* and *Flint Henry*.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **160 pages – \$22.99 – Cat. No. 809. Available now.**



Back in Stock:

Weapons and Assassins™

The weapons and secrets of real world, ancient assassins. Includes guilds and societies of assassins like the Order of the Assassins, Ninja and Thugs of India, as well as details about their weapons, tools, poisons, clothing, armor, methods and more. A fan favorite written by Erick Wujcik. Back in stock.

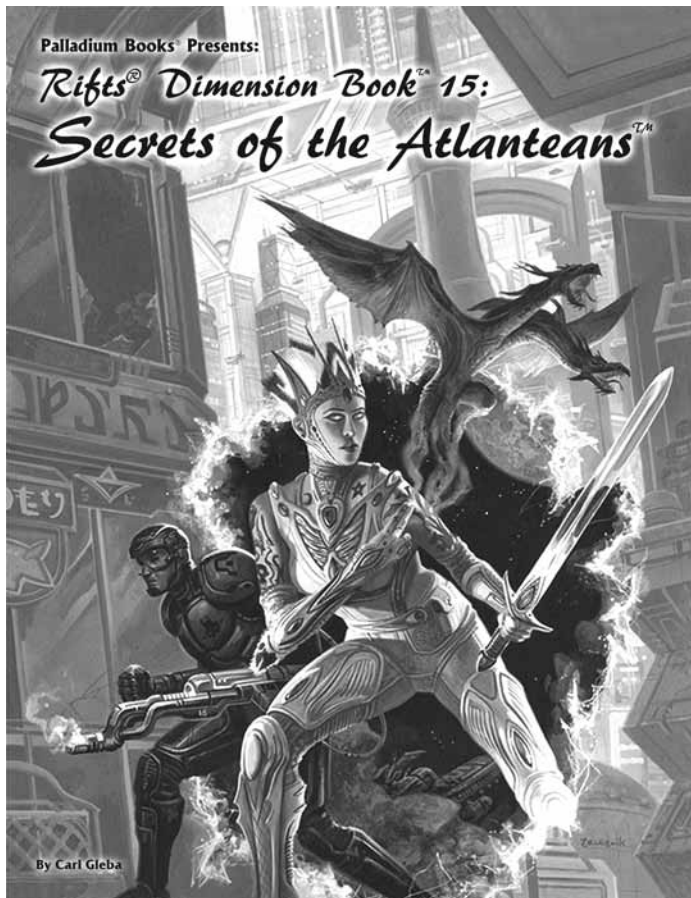
- **The Order of the Assassins.**
- **Thugs, the Assassins of India.**
- **The Ninja and their weapons, equipment and methods.**
- **Written by Erick Wujcik.**
- **48 pages – \$9.99 – Cat. No. 403. Available now.**

Rifts® Dimension Book 15:

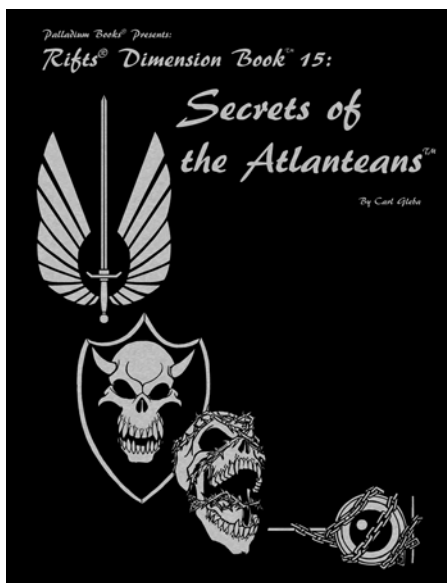
Secrets of the Atlanteans™

People love this book. Available now. True Atlanteans are among the most mysterious and storied heroes across the Megaverse®. Learn about Atlantean civilization, the many clans, where they are found across the Megaverse, why they hide, and why they hate the undead so much. Also discover the power of Shadow Magic, the treachery of the Sunaj Illuminati, and a darkness that could destroy them all.

- **60+ new Magic Tattoos.**
- **60+ Shadow Magic spells.**
- **30+ new Crystal Magic spells and the Crystal Mage O.C.C.**
- **Stone Pyramids described with floor plans.**
- **Stone Master and Undead Slayer, revisited.**
- **Sunaj Shadow Mage and Shadow Assassin O.C.C.s.**
- **The dark history, shame, and secrets of True Atlanteans.**
- **Learn more about the famous Atlantean Tattooed Warriors, Undead Slayers, Stone Masters and other Atlantean heroes.**
- **Tremble at the terrible secrets of the Aerihman and their plans for inter-dimensional domination.**



- Dark secrets of the sinister Sunaj secret society.
- Who are the Sunaj and why do they hunt True Atlanteans?
- Valuable source material and adventure ideas galore.
- \$24.95 retail for softcover edition – 224 pages – written by Carl Gleba – Cat. No. 890. Available now.



Secrets of the Atlanteans™

“Gold” Edition Hardcover

The deluxe hardcover “Gold” collector’s edition is *getting close to sold out* with fewer than 90 signed and numbered copies available. The source material in **Rifts® Secrets of the Atlante-**

ans™ is so awesome and the Atlanteans and Sunaj are so iconic, Palladium has made a limited edition, signed and numbered collector’s hardcover. Contains the same source material as the softcover edition. Signed by the Palladium staff and limited to 300 copies.

- **Black faux leather hardcover with metallic gold imprint.**
- **Signed by the Palladium staff.**
- **Numbered 1-300 and sold on a first come, first served basis.**
The number you receive is based on the order in which orders are received.
- **60+ new Magic Tattoos, 60+ Shadow Magic spells, 30+ new Crystal Magic spells, the Crystal Mage O.C.C., Stone Pyramids and everything in the softcover edition.**
- **\$50.00 retail – 224 pages – written by Carl Gleba – Cat. No. 890HC – Available now.**

Coming Soon! Rifts® Bestiary of North America, Vol. One

You requested it, so we are doing it: collecting the hundreds of monsters and beasts of Rifts Earth into easy to use reference books, similar to what we did with *D-Bees of North America*. Only there are so many wondrous and fierce creatures we cannot squeeze them into one book. The first two **Rifts® Bestiary™ sourcebooks** are being created simultaneously, right now! Between them, these two volumes compile all the beasts of *Rifts North America* (unintelligent monsters, predators, notable animals and intelligent beings that are monstrous or animal-like in appearance or behavior) from all current World Books and Sourcebooks. In addition, Kevin Siembieda, Chuck Walton and Greg Diaczek are adding some new monsters to make life in the wilderness interesting. Presented in alphabetical order, with maps showing their range and location, in two big books.

Note: If these two volumes do well, future volumes will include spirits, ghosts and entities, another on dragons, other volumes on creatures in other parts of Rifts Earth, and so on.

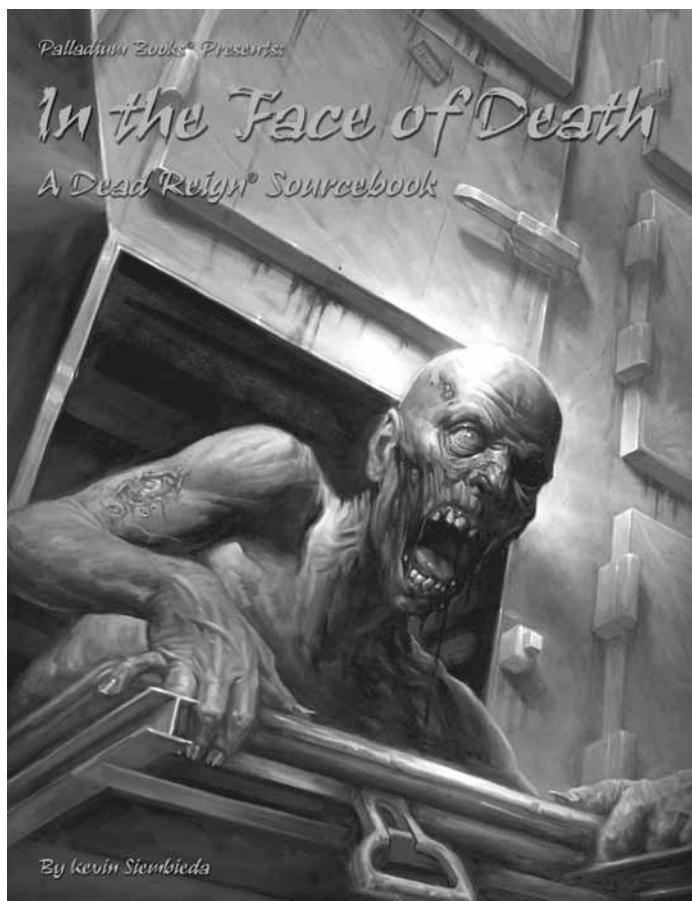
- **Monsters and animals of Rifts North America organized in two big, easy to use sourcebooks. Predators, exotic riding animals, beasts of burden, alien horrors, giant insects and more.**
- **Some new creatures, but most are existing creatures.**
- **Updated information where applicable.**
- **Updated and uniform stat blocks.**
- **A map for every creature showing where it is found.**
- **Fully illustrated.**
- **Art by Chuck Walton, Siembieda and many others.**
- **192-224 pages – \$26.99 retail – Cat. No. 896. In production.**
Anticipating **Rifts® Bestiary™ Vol. One** as an August or September release.

New! Rifts® Bestiary™ of North America, Vol. Two

More monsters and exotic animals of Rifts® North America as part of an ongoing series of **Rifts® Bestiary sourcebooks**. The first two **Rifts® Bestiaries, Volume One** and **Volume Two**, are being created simultaneously. Between them, these two volumes compile all the beasts of *Rifts North America* (unintelligent monsters, predators, notable animals and intelligent beings that

are monstrous or animal-like in appearance or behavior) from all current World Books and Sourcebooks, plus some new monsters by Siembieda and Walton. Presented in alphabetical order, with maps showing their range and location, in two big books. **Note:** If these two volumes do well, more will follow.

- **Monsters and animals of Rifts North America organized in two big, easy to use sourcebooks. Predators, exotic riding animals, beasts of burden, alien horrors, giant insects and more.**
- **Some new creatures, but most are existing creatures.**
- **Updated information where applicable.**
- **Updated and uniform stat blocks.**
- **A map for every creature showing where it is found.**
- **Fully illustrated.**
- **Art by Chuck Walton, Siembieda and many others.**
- **192-224 pages – \$26.99 retail – Cat. No. 897. In production. Anticipating Rifts® Bestiary™ Vol. Two to be a Fall release.**



COMING! In the Face of Death™

– A Dead Reign® Sourcebook – Fall 2018

The cover is done and I want it out in October! This sourcebook is all about inner city survival. Survivor colonies finding a way to live and prosper in the big city. Conventional wisdom says that living in the big population centers is impossible. These survivors prove otherwise.

- **Inner city survival. Old and new O.C.C.s.**
- **Skyscraper communities and life on the rooftops.**
- **Cults – the new power in the city.**
- **Gangs, street runners, the new underground, and more.**
- **Take your zombie campaign to new heights!**

- **Cover by E.M. Gist. Interior art by Nick Bradshaw.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda. Adaptable to other Palladium settings.**
- **Size and price not yet determined – Cat. No. 237. Fall/Winter, 2018.**

Update:

Palladium Fantasy®, Rifts®, etc.

Just because a specific title is not mentioned does not mean it is not coming out, it simply means there is nothing to report other than we are “working on it” and there is no “tentative” release date yet. We are trying not to show exact dates of release until we feel strongly we can hit them. We are working on a vast number of projects for a large number of our game lines.



NEW! Four New T-shirts – Available now

New Rifts® T-shirt! We kept this new Rifts® T-shirt simple and dynamic, featuring a CS soldier firing his gun. Is he friend or foe? You decide. It fits the current Rifts® story arc with the Minion War and most any theme involving Rifts and the Coalition States. Art by comic book artist Freddie Williams II. Enjoy. Cat. No. 2582.

Heroes Unlimited™ T-shirt! You have been asking to see more for **Heroes Unlimited™**, we heard you and offer this striking T-shirt as just the beginning of more support for **Heroes Unlimited™**. It was certainly a hit at the Palladium Open House. Cat. No. 2583.

New Game Master T-shirt features the dynamic artwork of *Kevin Long's* original Villains Unlimited cover. Why this art? A) Because G.M.s unleash the villains and challenges that await their players. B) Heroes Unlimited™ needs some loving. And C), because it is a dynamic piece of art that screams get ready for adventure. Cat. No. 2584.

The new **Palladium Open House T-shirt** is fun and one of my favorites, featuring art by Ramon K. Perez. You did not have to be at the Open House in person to get this fun T-shirt. If you were there in spirit or just like the design, snap it up. Limited to 120 shirts. Available only while supplies last. Cat. No. 2585.

- **All T-shirts are high quality, pre-shrunk, 100% cotton Gildan T-shirts and look great. I love all four. Wore the POH, G.M. and Heroes Unlimited T-shirts during the event and I'm wearing the Rifts® shirt for inspiration as I write this.**
- **Available in most sizes, Medium to 5XL, as usual.**
- **\$18.95 each for Medium to XL, \$20.95 for XXL, and up for larger sizes. All available now.**

Copyright 2018 Palladium Books Inc. All rights reserved. Rifts®, The Rifter®, RECON®, Splicers®, Powers Unlimited®, Palladium Books®, The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®, Phase World®, Nightbane®, Megaverse®, The Mechanoids®, The Mechanoid Invasion®, Coalition Wars®, Chaos Earth®, Dead Reign®, and After the Bomb® are Registered Trademarks of Palladium Books Inc. RPG Tactics™, Beyond the Supernatural, Coalition States, Heroes Unlimited, Ninjas & Superspies, Minion War, Mysteries of Magic, SAMAS, Thundercloud Galaxy, Three Galaxies, Vampire Kingdoms, and other published book titles, names, slogans and likenesses are trademarks of Palladium Books Inc., and Kevin Siembieda.



Palladium Books® Check List

The Rifter® Series

- ___ 177 The Rifter® #77 – \$13.95
- ___ 178 The Rifter® #78 – \$13.95
- ___ 179 The Rifter® #79 – \$13.95
- ___ 180 The Rifter® #80 – \$14.99
- ___ 181 The Rifter® #81 – \$14.99 (coming)
- ___ 182 The Rifter® #82 – \$14.99 (coming)

Splicers® More sourcebooks coming soon.

- ___ 200 Splicers® RPG – \$23.95
- ___ 201 Splicers®: I Am Legion – \$26.99

Dead Reign®

- ___ 230 Dead Reign® RPG – \$24.95
- ___ 231 SB 1: Civilization Gone™ – \$14.99
- ___ 232 SB 2: Dark Places™ – \$12.95
- ___ 233 SB 3: Endless Dead™ – \$16.95
- ___ 234 SB 4: Fear the Reaper™ – \$12.95
- ___ 235 SB 5: Graveyard Earth™ – \$12.95
- ___ 236 SB 6: Hell Followed™ – \$20.95
- ___ 237 SB 7: In the Face of Death™ – \$17.99 (coming)

Rifts® Novels

- ___ 301 Sonic Boom™ – \$9.95
- ___ 302 Deception's Web™ – \$9.95
- ___ 304 Tales of the Chi-Town 'Burbs™ – \$12.95
- ___ 305 Rifts® Path of the Storm™ – \$12.95

Weapons Books

- ___ 401 Weapons and Armor™ – \$8.95
- ___ 402 Weapons and Castles™ – \$8.95
- ___ 403 Weapons and Assassins™ – \$9.99
- ___ 404 Weapons & Castles of the Orient™ – \$9.95
- ___ 409 Exotic Weapons™ – \$9.99 (coming)
- ___ 410 European Castles™ – \$9.99 (coming)

Palladium Fantasy RPG®

- ___ 450 The Palladium Fantasy RPG® – \$26.95
- ___ 451 Dragons & Gods™ – \$24.95
- ___ 453 Old Ones™ 2nd Ed. – \$24.95
- ___ 454 Monsters & Animals™ 2nd Ed. – \$26.99
- ___ 455 Adventures on the High Seas™ – \$24.95
- ___ 458 Island at the Edge of the World™ – \$20.95
- ___ 459 Yin-Sloth Jungles™ – \$20.95
- ___ 462 Western Empire™ – \$24.95
- ___ 463 Baalgor Wastelands™ – \$24.95
- ___ 464 Mount Nimro™ – \$20.95
- ___ 465 Eastern Territory™ – \$24.95
- ___ 466 Library of Bletherad™ – \$20.95
- ___ 467 Northern Hinterlands™ – \$24.95
- ___ 468 Land/Damned 1: Chaos Lands™ – \$24.95
- ___ 469 LoD 2: Eternal Torment™ – \$24.95
- ___ 470 LoD 3: The Citadel – \$26.99 (coming)
- ___ 471 Wolfen Empire™ – \$20.95
- ___ 472 Mysteries of Magic™ One: Heart of Magic – \$16.95
- ___ 474 Bizantium/Northern Islands™ – \$24.95
- ___ 475 Garden of the Gods™ – \$17.99 (coming)

Heroes Unlimited™ / After the Bomb®

- ___ 500-2 Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Ed. – \$26.95
- ___ 5000HC Heroes Unlimited™
- ___ 30th Anniversary Hardcover – \$50.00
- ___ 501 Villains Unlimited™ Revised – \$24.95
- ___ 503 After the Bomb® RPG – \$24.95
- ___ 505 Road Hogs™ (After the Bomb® II) – \$9.95
- ___ 507 Mutants Down Under™ (AB III) – \$9.95
- ___ 511 Mutants of the Yucatan™ (AB IV) – \$9.95
- ___ 513 Mutants in Avalon™ (AB V) – \$16.95
- ___ 514 Mutants in Orbit™ (AB VI) – \$16.95
- ___ 515 Aliens Unlimited™ – \$24.95
- ___ 516 Heroes Unlimited™ G.M.'s Guide – \$24.95
- ___ 517 Century Station™ – \$24.95
- ___ 518 Gramercy Island™ – \$24.95
- ___ 519 Aliens Unlimited Galaxy Guide™ – \$24.95
- ___ 520 Mutant Underground™ – \$16.95
- ___ 521 Powers Unlimited® One – \$16.95
- ___ 522 Powers Unlimited® Two – \$16.95
- ___ 523 Powers Unlimited® Three – \$16.95
- ___ 525 Revised Ninjas & Superspies™ – \$20.95
- ___ 526 Mystic China™ – \$24.95
- ___ 527 Armageddon Unlimited™ – \$20.95

Beyond the Supernatural™

- ___ 700 Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Ed. – \$24.95
- ___ 702 Tome Grotesque™ – \$22.99 (coming)
- ___ 703 Beyond Arcanum™ – \$26.99 (coming)

Nightbane®

- ___ 730 Nightbane® RPG – \$24.95
- ___ 731 Nightbane®: Between the Shadows™ – \$20.95
- ___ 732 Nightbane®: Nightlands™ – \$20.95
- ___ 733 Nightbane®: Through the Glass Darkly™ – \$20.95
- ___ 735 Nightbane® Survival Guide™ – \$20.95
- ___ 736 Nightbane® Dark Designs™ – \$20.95

Rifts® Chaos Earth®

- ___ 660 Rifts® Chaos Earth® RPG – \$20.95
- ___ 661 Rifts® CE Creatures of Chaos™ – \$12.95
- ___ 662 Rifts® CE The Rise of Magic™ – \$12.95
- ___ 665 Rifts® Chaos Earth® First Responders™ – \$17.99 (coming)
- ___ 666 Rifts® Chaos Earth® Resurrection™ – \$20.95
- ___ 667 Rifts® Chaos Earth® Psychic Scream™ – \$17.99 (coming)

Rifts®

- ___ 800HC Rifts® RPG Ultimate Edition – \$41.99
- ___ 801 Rifts® Sourcebook One Revised – \$22.99
- ___ 802-E Rifts® World Book 1: Vampire Kingdoms™, Revised – \$26.99

- ___ 803 Rifts® Conversion Book One™ – \$24.95
- ___ 804 Rifts® WB 2: Atlantis™ – \$20.95
- ___ 805 Rifts® Sourcebook 2: Mechanoids™ – \$17.99
- ___ 807 Rifts® WB 3: England™ – \$20.95
- ___ 808 Rifts® WB 4: Africa™ – \$20.95
- ___ 809 Rifts® Dimension Book 1: Wormwood™ – \$22.99
- ___ 810 Rifts® WB 5: Triax™ – \$24.95
- ___ 811 Rifts® Pantheons of the Megaverse® – \$24.95
- ___ 812 Rifts® Sourcebook 3: Mindwerks™ – \$17.99
- ___ 813 Rifts® Mercenaries™ – \$20.95
- ___ 814 Rifts® WB 6: South America – \$20.95
- ___ 815 Rifts® WB 7: Underseas™ – \$24.95
- ___ 816 Rifts® DB 2: Phase World® – \$26.99
- ___ 817 Rifts® DB 3: Phase World® Sourcebook – \$16.95
- ___ 818 Rifts® WB 8: Rifts® Japan™ – \$24.95
- ___ 819 Rifts® WB 9: South America Two™ – \$24.95
- ___ 820 Rifts® WB 10: Juicer Uprising™ – \$20.95
- ___ 821 Rifts® WB 11: Coalition War Campaign™ – \$24.95
- ___ 822 Rifts® WB 12: Psyscape™ – \$20.95
- ___ 825 Rifts® WB 13: Lone Star™ – \$20.95
- ___ 826 Rifts® WB 14: New West™ – \$26.99
- ___ 827 Rifts® WB 15: Spirit West™ – \$24.95
- ___ 828 Rifts® Sourcebook 4: Coalition Navy™ – \$16.95
- ___ 829 Rifts® WB 16: Federation of Magic™ – \$22.99
- ___ 830 Rifts® DB 4: Skraypers™ – \$20.95
- ___ 831 Rifts® Index Volume Two™ – \$16.95
- ___ 832 Rifts® WB 17: Warlords of Russia™ – \$24.95
- ___ 833 Rifts® WB 18: Mystic Russia™ – \$20.95
- ___ 834 Rifts® WB 19: Australia – \$24.95
- ___ 835 Rifts® WB 20: Canada™ – \$24.95
- ___ 836 Rifts® WB 21: Splynn Dimensional Market™ – \$24.95
- ___ 837 Rifts® WB 22: Free Quebec™ – \$24.95
- ___ 838 Rifts® WB 23: Xitcix Invasion™ – \$22.99
- ___ 839 Rifts® Coalition Wars®: Sedition™ – \$22.99
- ___ 840 Rifts® Coalition Wars®: Coalition Overkill™ – \$17.99
- ___ 841 Rifts® Coalition Wars®: Sorcerers' Revenge™ – \$16.95
- ___ 842 Rifts® Coalition Wars®: Cyber-Knights™ – \$17.99
- ___ 843 Rifts® Coalition Wars®: Shadows of Evil™ – \$16.95

- ___ 844 Rifts® Coalition Wars®: Final Siege™ – \$24.95
- ___ 845 Rifts® Game Master Guide™ – \$26.95
- ___ 846 Rifts® Aftermath™ – \$26.99
- ___ 847 Rifts® DB5: Anvil Galaxy™ – \$20.95
- ___ 848 Rifts® Book of Magic™ – \$26.95
- ___ 849 Rifts® Adventure Guide™ – \$24.95
- ___ 850 Rifts® Bionics Sourcebook™ – \$17.99
- ___ 851 Rifts® DB 6: Three Galaxies™ – \$20.95
- ___ 852 Rifts® Dark Conversions™ – \$24.95
- ___ 853 Rifts® Chi-Town ‘Burbs™ – \$9.99
- ___ 854 Rifts® The Tolkien Crisis™ – \$12.95
- ___ 855 Rifts® The Black Vault™ – \$9.95
- ___ 856 Rifts® The Vanguard™ – \$9.95
- ___ 857 Rifts® WB 24: China One™ – \$20.95
- ___ 858 Rifts® WB 25: China Two™ – \$20.95
- ___ 859 Rifts® DB 7: Megaverse Builder™ – \$16.95
- ___ 860 Rifts® DB 8: Naruni Wave 2™ – \$16.95
- ___ 862 Rifts® WB 26: Dinosaur Swamp™ – \$20.95
- ___ 863 Rifts® MercTown™ – \$20.95
- ___ 865 Rifts® Merc Ops™ – \$20.95
- ___ 866 Rifts® WB 27: Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp™ – \$20.95
- ___ 867 Rifts® Mercenary Adventure Sourcebook – \$12.95
- ___ 868 Rifts® WB 28: Arzno™ – \$20.95
- ___ 869 Rifts® WB 29: Madhaven™ – \$16.95
- ___ 870 Rifts® John Zeleznik Coloring Book – \$5.95
- ___ 871 Rifts® Machinations of Doom™ – \$18.95
- ___ 872 Rifts® DB 10: Hades™ – \$24.95
- ___ 873 Rifts® DB 11: Dyval™ – \$24.95
- ___ 874 Rifts® WB 30: D-Bees of North America™ – \$24.95
- ___ 875 Rifts® DB12: Dimensional Outbreak – \$24.95
- ___ 876 Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames™ – \$24.95
- ___ 876HC Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames™ Gold Hardcover Edition – \$50.00
- ___ 877 Rifts® Heroes of the Megaverse® – \$16.95
- ___ 878 Rifts® Sourcebook: Shemarrian Nation™ – \$17.99
- ___ 880 Phase World®: Fleets of the Three Galaxies™ – \$17.99
- ___ 881 Rifts® WB 31: Triax™ Two – \$26.99
- ___ 883 Rifts® DB 14: Thundercloud Galaxy™ – \$20.95
- ___ 884 Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook™ – \$20.95
- ___ 885 Rifts® WB 32: Lemuria™ – \$24.95
- ___ 886 Rifts® Black Market™ – \$26.99
- ___ 887 Rifts® WB 33: Northern Gun™ One – \$24.95
- ___ 888 Rifts® WB 34: Northern Gun™ Two – \$26.95
- ___ 889 Rifts® Sourcebook: Coalition States, Heroes of Humanity™ – \$20.95
- ___ 890 Rifts® Dimension Book 15: Secrets of the Atlanteans™ – \$24.95
- ___ 890HC Rifts® DB 15: Secrets of the Atlanteans™ Gold Edition – \$50.00
- ___ 891 Rifts® World Book: Sovietski™ – \$26.95

- ___ 892 Rifts® Sourcebook: The Disavowed™ – \$17.99 (coming)
- ___ 893 Rifts® CS: Heroes of Humanity™ Arsenal Sourcebook – \$17.99 (coming)
- ___ 894 Rifts® Haunted Tech™ – \$17.99 (coming)
- ___ 895 Rifts® Living Nowhere™ – \$17.99 (coming)
- ___ 896 Rifts® Bestiary: North America, Volume One – \$26.99 (coming)
- ___ 897 Rifts® Bestiary: North America, Volume Two – \$26.99 (coming)
- ___ 898 Rifts® Antarctica – \$22.99 (coming)
- ___ 2510 Rifts® & The Megaverse® Art Book – \$22.95
- ___ 2510-HC Rifts® & The Megaverse® Art Book, Hardcover – \$50.00
- ___ 2510-CML Rifts® & The Megaverse® Art Book, Collector’s Masterwork – \$125.00

Miscellaneous Products

- ___ 400 Mechanoid Invasion® Trilogy – \$24.95
- ___ 600 Deluxe Revised RECON® RPG – \$22.95
- ___ 2537 Gamer Coffee Mug – \$10.00
- ___ 2545 Dead Reign® Coffee Mug – \$10.00
- ___ 2554 Palladium Bookmarks, Set One – \$5.00
- ___ 2555 Palladium Bookmarks, Set Two – \$5.00
- ___ 2562 Future Visions™ – The Artistry of Charles Walton II – \$13.95
- ___ 2566 Glitter Boy Mouse Pad – \$9.95
- ___ 2567 Old Ones Mouse Pad – \$9.95
- ___ 2568 Zombie Graveyard Mouse Pad – \$9.95
- ___ 2575 Rifts Poker Cards 1 (full color) – \$11.99
- ___ 2576 Rifts Poker Cards 2 (line art) – \$11.99

Note: T-shirts and other products can be found online:

Rifts® Miniatures

- ___ MI8002 Xiticix Pack – \$18.00
- ___ MI8004 Coalition Dog Pack – \$18.00
- ___ MI8005 Men of Magic Pack #1 – \$18.00
- ___ MI8006 Cyborgs Pack #1 – \$18.00
- ___ MI8007 Simvan & Ostrosaurus Pack – \$18.00
- ___ MI8008 Coalition Skelebots Pack #1 – \$18.00
- ___ MI8009 Coalition SAMAS Pack #1 – \$22.00
- ___ MI8010 Coalition Sky Cycle Pack – \$22.00
- ___ MI8011 Coalition Dog Pack #2 – \$18.00
- ___ MI8015 Damaged Skelebots Pack #1 – \$12.00
- ___ MI8016 Cyber-Adventurers Pack – \$18.00
- ___ MI8017 Rogues & Scout Pack #1 – \$18.00
- ___ MI8018 Brodkil & Witchling Pack – \$18.00
- ___ MI8019 Damaged Skelebots Pack #2 – \$18.00
- ___ MI8020 Psi-Stalkers & Scouts Pack #1 – \$18.00
- ___ MI8021 Shadow Beast – \$12.00
- ___ MI8022 Mystic Knight – \$6.00
- ___ MI8023 Lord Magus – \$6.00
- ___ MI8024 High Magus – \$6.00
- ___ MI8025 Coalition Psi-Stalker – \$6.00
- ___ MI8026 Coalition Dog Boy in DPM-D1 Armor – \$6.00
- ___ MI8027 Coalition Dog Boy #2 – \$6.00
- ___ MI8028 Coalition Dog Boy #3 – \$6.00

- ___ MI8029 Coalition Dog Boy #4 – \$6.00
- ___ MI8030 Coalition Dog Boy #5 – \$6.00
- ___ MI8031 Glitter Boy – \$20.00
- ___ MI8032 Glitter Boy Pilot – \$6.00
- ___ MI8033 Kydian Overlord – \$20.00
- ___ MI8034 Dragonsaurus – \$10.00
- ___ MI8035 Slaver and Slave (Atlantis) Set – \$10.00
- ___ MI8036 Crazy – \$6.00
- ___ MI8037 Juicer #1 – \$6.00
- ___ MI8038 Juicer #2 – \$6.00
- ___ MI8039 Cyborg #1 – \$12.00
- ___ MI8040 Cyborg #2 – \$12.00
- ___ MI8041 Cyborg #3 – \$6.00
- ___ MI8042 Coalition Officer – \$6.00
- ___ MI8043 Coalition Grunt #1 – \$6.00
- ___ MI8044 Coalition Grunt #2 – \$6.00
- ___ MI8045 Coalition Grunt #3 – \$6.00



www.palladiumbooks.com



Wayfarers

By Julius Rosenstein

Additional text and ideas by Kevin Siembieda

Official Source Material for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

In medieval settings, travel by land is very difficult and dangerous. The only modes of transportation, excluding magic, are usually by foot, or animal, either riding the animals or on some type of vehicle (i.e. a wagon, cart, chariot, etc.) drawn by the animal. In addition to the dangers of the wild, such as wild beasts and bandits that lurk along the route, travelers are likely to be unaware of situations that may be awaiting them. This includes lo-

cal feuds and border wars, a local king or warlord who may have recently been deposed or killed, resulting in unrest and chaos in the immediate area that is unknown to travelers; or the area may still be an active war zone, or an unexpectedly renewed war zone. Thus, instead of a safe or friendly welcome awaiting the travelers, they find a much darker reception at the beginning, middle or end of their journey. And of course, new avenues for adventure.

An uninformed traveler might arrive at their destination only to face being conscripted into military service, arrested as a spy, have their possessions confiscated either as contraband or for the war effort (i.e., to be used by the military), or simply because whomever is currently wielding local power is greedy and wants their goods. Worse, travelers might be taken captive for the purpose of being sold into slavery, or imprisoned unfairly, and even put to death!

On the other hand, they may find gainful employment as mercenary fighters, spies or agents for one side of the conflict or the other, or find opportunities with other factions looking to take advantage of the local turmoil. But even this potential good fortune comes with considerable risk and requires insight and information. Otherwise, the adventurers may find themselves being duped by evildoers, inadvertently hurting the innocent, or used as pawns in a larger game.

Even if the destination is peaceful and welcoming, the journey itself may offer some challenges and hazards, especially when traveling down unknown roads and trails through the untamed wilderness. Many times the journey leads through natural obstacles such as mountains, deserts, rivers and swamps. The closest thing to a road might be an old animal trail or a nice dirt road. However, that nice road or a bridge across a stream may have been washed away, or the travelers may find the road or trail branches off, except that branch is not on the map or in their directions. Which way do they go? Moreover, you never know who or what you might meet on the trail, or where that encounter might lead to. Unless you know how to live off the land, foraging for food and shelter might be a futile or hazardous effort all by itself; and, even if one is experienced at finding food, there may be no food to be found. Or there may be a nasty competitor for the food.

For these reasons and others, the vast majority of people in ancient and medieval settings might spend their entire lives never traveling further than 20-25 miles (32 to 40 km) from where they were born. Leaving the safety of their community or local is unsafe and undesirable. It happens only under extreme circumstance. For example, the person might voluntarily join the military or be forcibly conscripted; or be compelled to leave by order of their noble lord; or be forced out due to flooding or some other disaster. Other reasons to leave home might be to visit or care for an ailing relative, or to make a religious pilgrimage, participate in a once in a lifetime special event, or mandatory ceremony/celebration, or a rare opportunity that cannot be passed up because it will benefit the individual and the entire family. Other than that, travel is too dangerous and scary.

Social conditioning is also a factor. People are raised to think and behave in the way society sets for them. This creates a particular mind-set that everyone has a certain place and a certain calling that should not be questioned. It is their fate or lot in life to be a peasant, noble, knight or king. The task of **the peasants** is to toil in the fields and serve their “betters,” so why should they travel? The duty of the **knights and nobles** is to rule the land, lead their chattel (i.e., the peasants) and protect their inferiors (i.e. the peasants and the commoners). Knights and nobles travel for war, for political and social reason, and for business deals, but otherwise they are the protectors of the realm and should stay in their homeland and manage the rabble. The role of **the clergy** is to service the la-

ity – the non-clerical population, both noble and ignoble. This includes interceding with the higher powers and guiding their charges (the common man) to proper conduct and dutiful support of the church and the deities they represent. **The king** to lead and rule them all.

The best way for most people to accomplish their lot in life is for them to set down roots, obey the law and their leaders, and to remain in the position and place where they belong. To insure obedience and compliancy, the powers that be often pass laws binding people to the land, making it all the more difficult, if not impossible, for them to leave or change their social status.

However, there is a people among the humans to whom the siren call of the open road is irresistible. Wanderers and rovers who find that staying in one place and setting down roots is too confining. They shook off society’s shackles and, for them, travel has become a way of life. These people are known as **the Wayfarers**, or ‘**Farers** for short.

G.M.s using Wayfarer NPCs

The Wayfarers characters are inspired by the legends and stories of Earth gypsies. As with any people, there are evil and wicked Wayfarers, but the majority are Anarchists who watch out for themselves and their fellow Wayfarer clansmen. They see themselves as members of a specific people that started out as family clans, long ago, and have grown into a “nation” of wanderers without a homeland. As you read on you will see that Wayfarers have their own unique worldview, culture, and customs. First among those is that all Wayfarers are family, and family sticks with family. No matter what. *Everyone else* is an “outsider” and a “mark” to be fleeced and taken advantage of as circumstance allows. As a result, all Wayfarers, even the nicest and most honest, tends to live by the *Swapper’s Code* and the morality of the *Anarchist alignment*. The Wayfarer’s culture is such that adults and children alike have learned to live by their wits and share a disdain for rules and bit of larceny in their hearts.

As an NPC (Non-Player Character), Wayfarers should not be played as bandits or cutthroats, but as silver-tongued charlatans, con artists and thieves always looking for an angle to play, an easy payday, or a scam to pull on someone. And because of their Anarchist leanings, they are more like a clan of Robin Hoods who like to target the wealthy, the ruling class, the authorities, the clergy and merchants, rather than steal from peasants or the working class. While they are happy to break bread with lords and peasants alike, it is the poor and the downtrodden with whom they feel the most empathy and kinship. It is they to whom Wayfarers are most like to freely lend a helping hand and offer sincere charity.

In their own way, Wayfarers are charming and loveable rogues who respect life and care about ordinary people. ‘Farers don’t have political aspirations, don’t seek to hold positions of power, and don’t want to settle down. Nor do they favor one kingdom or people over another. They enjoy living by their wits and wiles. Preferring to use cunning, quick-thinking and chicanery to win the day rather than by sword and bloodshed. They seldom kill, even the rich, without good reason nor out of revenge. After all, you can only steal from a dead man once.

Wayfarers

A nomadic life

Wayfarers, because of their travels and no allegiance to any existing kingdom, church or power block, embrace all people, all races and generally share a live and let live, attitude. All of which makes them an interesting wild card a Game Master can drop into a game at almost any time, almost anywhere.

Players should, of course, be wary of any encounter with one or more Wayfarers – and where there is one, there are likely to be others lurking about or waiting nearby. Wayfarers love to gamble and embrace games of chance, tests of skill, drinking, dancing and partying. Of course, many cheat at such games whenever they can, and drink – or more to the point, ply their “marks” with alcohol – to get information or to distract them while another one of them picks his pocket, steals his horse, breaks into his home or business to rob it, or um, has relations with his woman. Many are also skilled storytellers and spinners of yarns (i.e. liars and con artists) to win favor, make a sale and get their way.

Such are the ways of these impertinent and impetuous rogues. Which makes them excellent information brokers, and snitches, thieves and smugglers for hire, as well as fences who buy and sell stolen goods. Ah, but Wayfarers are probably most publicly known as traveling entertainers. Bards and minstrels, singers of songs, dancers (especially beautiful woman dancers), acrobats, jugglers, traveling puppet shows, gamblers, fortune tellers, and bootleggers. *Wayfarer moonshine* is well known as the best, and the best of their best can make a Dwarf or Wolfen drunk after three drinks.

In a game context, encounters with Wayfarers can provide player characters a way to sell stolen goods (though usually paying out only 10-20% of the item’s real value), acquire contraband, trade goods (getting them 50% of the value in the trade of goods or services; sometimes an even trade depending on what it is and circumstance), the trade/selling or purchase of information about a place or an enemy, or an opportunity to gamble, booze it up, or stay (though they better hold onto their purse strings). Wayfarers can also be a means to acquire special services such as healing, forgery, and smuggling, or to hire a Wayfarer to do spy work or steal for them. Best of all, such transactions are “off the record,” so to speak. Meaning the local authorities, magistrate and townspeople won’t know anything about it. Wayfarers can also be hired to smuggle people or goods in and out of an area (for a 20% cut), hide fugitives, help outlaws, and work as a spy or thief on the player group’s behalf, provided the pay is right.

Remember those hazards of travel and not knowing what lies ahead? The well traveled Wayfarer is likely to be very aware of the local hazards, political climate, local leaders, regional monsters, brewing conflicts, local rivalries, recent events and rumors of any place they have recently visited or passed through. Valuable information they should be willing to share, for a price.

On the other hand, any encounter with one or more Wayfarers runs the same risk as any dealing with crooks and con artists, the player characters may find themselves robbed or tricked and cheated out of their hard won belongings. And Paladins, knights, scholars, merchants, clergy or any character of noble heritage or obvious wealth is a prime target.

In the long and colored history of the Palladium World, there are a great many people of different ethnicity and species: Lizard people, Gromek, Minotaurs, Elves, Dwarves, humans and more. Kingdoms have risen and they have fallen. The present era is considered the age of humans, though the Wolfen Empire is also on the rise. Wayfarers are one more group of humans with an unusual lifestyle.

No one really seems to know too much about the Wayfarers. Where they come from, how long they have been around, why they prefer their uniquely nomadic lifestyle, or what, if any, are their ultimate goals and ambitions.

One of the most popular theories is that the Wayfarers began as a dozen disenfranchised noble families kicked out during the early days of the *Western Empire*. There is mention in the Empire’s history of banishing entire families of the old ruling class and sending them into the wilderness. Undoubtedly, the *Kingdom of Timiro* rejected these people, leaving them to wander the *Baalgor Wastelands* and *Old Kingdom*, the two places from which Wayfarers are said to originate. As the story goes, these clans chose to become a wandering nation in and of themselves. Citizens of the world with no borders or boundaries, free to do as they please with no king or lords of whom to answer.

If the Wayfarers themselves know their true origin, they aren’t talking. Most seem to lead a cheerful, bohemian lifestyle of wandering, living by their wits and wiles, and enjoying life without the drudgery of working the fields, hard physical labor or war.

Things everyone knows about Wayfarers. They travel the known world in caravans of brightly painted wagons. Have no homeland. Always seem friendly and welcoming. Their women are beautiful. Their men charming. All Wayfarers enjoy drinking, singing, dancing, and revelry. Even the monster races of the Old Kingdom trade with the Wayfarers. Which means their caravans come loaded with furs and teeth, exotic items, spices, elixirs and alcohol. They also bring with them news, rumors and stories from across the land. Among them are world’s greatest seers and fortune tellers who can see into the future and reveal what fate awaits you – for a price. Many Wayfarers are bards and entertainers – masters of song, dance, music and storytelling. As such, ‘Farers are always up for a party or celebration, and games of chance. But be warned, many a Wayfarer has been known to cheat and stack the odds in their own favor. And it is said that they all have sticky fingers. In fact, many people consider Wayfarers to be nothing more than lazy, drunken partygoers, con artists, gamblers, and thieves.

Most Wayfarers are human. Though human themselves, they often befriend and associate with non-humans and count friends and allies among almost all the people of the Palladium world. However, their “them and us attitude” and distrust of outsiders, human and non-human, limits who they truly adopt into their family clans. Less than 4% of the Wayfarers are non-humans, and most of those are human-like in appearance, such as Elves, Dwarves, Changelings disguised as humans, and the occasional Orc or Ogre. On the other hand, once adopted and accepted as a Wayfarer, the adopted son or daughter has the same status and rights as all ‘Farers.

In some places, 'Farers are welcomed with open arms and great fanfare. In other lands they are pariahs. Many people and places welcome Wayfarers for the news they bring, their colorful stories, exotic trade goods, and the special skills and talents they provide. In other places, their "acquiring ways" (i.e. thieving) and often checkered reputation makes them about as welcome as an outbreak of the plague. Regardless of what kind of welcome they receive, in most places, especially isolated and out of the way spots, the arrival of a caravan of Wayfarers is like a breath of fresh air. As if a carnival has come to the outskirts of town, because they come with minstrels, dancers, fortune tellers, healers, exciting stories, booze and exotic foods and fare gathered along their journey.

Wayfarers have never desired to settle down and set up permanent homes. The closest that they have ever done along these lines are setting up temporary encampments. Among many Wayfarer caravans, it is a common practice to find certain sites and towns for pitching their camps, always on a temporary basis, and, after further travels elsewhere, eventually returning to that same location at another point in time. Regular visits enable the 'Farers to interact and actually make lasting friends (or foes) with the people of a particular town, village or community. These wandering opportunists may also look to trade goods and services with trading posts, churches/temples, tribal people, and mercenary groups, and perhaps, bandits and other individuals of ill repute.

Wayfarers readily acknowledge that there are traditional kingdoms – after all, one can hardly pretend that the Western Empire or the Timiro Kingdom do not exist – but they do not consider themselves to be subjects of these kingdoms nor subject to their laws, which can lead to trouble. Beyond grudgingly paying whatever taxes and fees local government officials may assess on them, and obeying the laws of the land – or more likely trying not to get caught disobeying said laws – most Wayfarers try to stay under the radar of the authorities, especially if they are thieves, pickpockets, con artists or engaged in breaking into and robbing homes or businesses, rustling cattle, stealing livestock and similar crimes. When a caravan of Wayfarers leave town in the middle of the night, odds are they are on the lam after making a big score and want to put miles between them before their victim(s) realize they have been robbed.

As a general rule, Wayfarers consider themselves to be a **nation of unto themselves**. However, instead of being confined to any one geographic area, they are a *kingdom of rovers* that is spread out in caravans all over the known world. It is not location or friendship that determines this status, but the bonds of Wayfarer families and tradition. Wayfarers are born, raised, and indoctrinated into the flashy, devil-may-care, and crooked lifestyle of this opportunistic, nomadic society. They spend their entire lives traveling across other lands owned by many kingdoms, lords and ladies. Always the visitor. Always a force unto themselves. It doesn't matter how many times a particular Wayfarer clan/caravan may return to the same location and break bread, drink and trade with the local townspeople. They might even camp in the exact same location every spring, summer or autumn, and make friends with many of the townspeople whom they genuinely like. In the end, however, these "friends" in town are still *outsiders* and *marks* to be, and in this case, gently used for the Wayfarers' own ends. The nomads may choose to help their friends in a time of need (especially if they can profit from it), but the Wayfarers'

true allegiance always lies, first, to the specific "tribe"/caravan they were born into, and second, to the larger nation of all fellow Wayfarers. They never consider themselves to be citizens of any city, town or community, let alone belonging to any one nation or kingdom. They are free-spirited "citizens of the world."

Wayfarer Society

Wayfarer Wagons

Wayfarer society is centered around the caravan. The most prized possessions of the Wayfarers are their brightly colored **wagons**. They are the objects that Outsiders most associate with Wayfarers. To the 'Farers, the wagons are a combination of home, method of transportation, status symbol, fortress, and emblem of pride. Wayfarers who, for some reason, have been banned from the wagons may continue to travel (on foot) with the caravan but suffer a loss of status and often become objects of scorn or pity unless they can redeem themselves, and once again be allowed back on a wagon, whether it be their original wagon or a different one.

Each of the ornate wagons is typically the home of one immediate family, ranging from 3-6 people. Double wagons – two wagons, one hitched to the lead wagon drawn by a team of horses or oxen – is either the home of a Wizard-Thief, Seer, Caravan Master and his immediate family, one large family with mom, dad, their 4-8 children, grandma and grandpa, and/or one or more siblings. As a rule, when two people wed, they are expected to immediately build or acquire their own colorful wagon and start building their own family. Only single adult children may stay with their parents. So most wagons belong to a couple or a family. The plainest wagons and flat bed wagons are typically supply wagons or transport livestock (chickens, geese, sheep, goats, and sometimes pigs and cattle). Mules, horses and oxen usually are led along on ropes between wagons in the caravan.

Wayfarer wagons are reinforced for rigorous travel and can take a fair amount of physical abuse. When they are attacked, either while encamped or on the move, they take shelter in the wagons and use them as mobile mini-bunkers. However, when this occurs, it is considered a tactic of either necessity or desperation. Wayfarers never deliberately endanger their wagons in battle except under extraordinary circumstances. It is an indication of how much Wayfarers value their wagons that they would rather willingly leave the protection and security of the wagons than put them at risk.

When Wayfarers fight among themselves, even if the fight is particularly vicious, the wagons are considered as "off-limits."

Oddly, despite some Wayfarer families living in a certain wagon for years (or even generations), the wagons are not considered to be their personal property. Wayfarer wagons are the property of the caravan clan. As such, the Caravan Master has the right to decide who lives where. However, among the Wayfarers, there is a sort of *Squatter's Rights*, so a family that has lived in a particular wagon for a long period does have the right to appeal an eviction with the Council of Elders or with the evictor's superior if there is one.

In general, Wayfarers are usually permitted to remain in the wagon of their birth and/or childhood and most of them prefer it that way. It is a common mindset among them that if given a



choice between living in their childhood home in fair condition versus moving to a newer wagon in better condition, but with less memories and traditions attached, most would prefer to remain in the wagon with family history attached.

Only **Wayfarer Seers** and sometimes **Healers** are allowed to live alone in their own wagon if they want to, or share it with an unmarried companion or two. This is out of respect for their station and power within Wayfarer society, and because their wagons often serve the *dual purpose* of being an apothecary and private meeting place where the Seer or Healer can meet with paying clients to perform “private” consultations, palm readings, tell fortunes, commune with spirits, experience visions and recuse themselves to meditate, rest and recover, and to brew tonics, elixirs and moonshine (the good stuff). The elderly without a spouse or children are taken in by a cousin or other more distant family member, or by some kind member of the Caravan. Wayfarers always take care of their own and respect elders. A caravan is always composed of families, with men, women, children and elders.

Random Caravan Size Table:

Roll percentile dice or select the size most appropriate for the encounter. Averages 8 people per wagon, sometimes a bit less (6), sometimes a bit more (10).

01-25% Tiny Caravan: 1D6+6 wagons +10% additional wagons for carrying supplies, livestock and trade goods.

26-55% Small: 2D4+10 wagons +10% additional wagons for supplies, livestock and trade goods.

56-85% Medium: 3D6+14 wagons +10% additional wagons for supplies, livestock and trade goods.

86-95% Large: 6D6+30 wagons +20% additional wagons for supplies, livestock and trade goods.

96-00% Huge: 1D6x10+90 wagons +20% additional wagons for supplies, livestock and trade goods.

If there are more wagons than that, it is probably a gathering of two or more separate caravans or a Confederation.

Wayfarer Confederation/Gathering

Sometimes two or three caravans may decide to travel together. This can be for the purpose of safety in numbers or for the companionship and trade between the two groups. When five or more caravans gather in one place, they combine to form a **Wayfarer Confederation**, with an appointed Clan Chief and a War Chief (effectively a Wayfarer King and Warlord/General), respectively. A Confederation is always a temporary gathering that seldom lasts for more than 1D4 weeks. Such gatherings occur every 4 or 5 years, usually to address one or more specific problems or concerns, or to simply make sure everyone stays in touch, gets to know each other and socialize. After all, the Wayfarers are a giant family of outcasts and they need these “large to giant family reunions” to maintain the familial bonds. As a result, there are usually 2-3 days that feel like a festival with song, music and dancing, games, drinking, gambling, and friendly competitions. In the latter two cases, that may involve anything from sports, wrestling, knife throwing, and equestrian events to games of cards, dice and seeing who can drink whom under the table. This is also the time and place to iron out any differences that may have arisen between caravans since the last gathering.

Each caravan clan is generally autonomous when off on their own, but during a Confederation they are subject to the decisions, decrees and verdicts issued by the Clan Chief (Wayfarer King) or War Chief (Wayfarer Military/Strategic leader). Those decisions are made prior to the formal and official decree/pronouncement via discussion, debates and decision-making by

the Caravan Masters or the Caravan Masters and their Council of Elders. Majority rule is the rule of thumb with the Caravan Chief breaking ties. These are the big decisions that affect all Wayfarers or the fate of a specific caravan or the leadership of a specific caravan that has been deemed to have gone rogue or out of control. Such decisions may involve matters of potential war/conflict, Wayfarers being hunted and slaughtered by a particular group (and what to be done about it), Wayfarer conduct, people, places or kingdoms not to be antagonized because of the threat of violent retaliation against all Wayfarers, common goals, and similar matters of grave importance that could affect them all. (**Note:** Outsiders rarely differentiate between one caravan and another. They are ALL Wayfarers to them, without distinction. So the conduct of one or a few caravans can have an impact on all.) However, for the most part, caravan clans are left to their own devices and big decisions affecting all Wayfarers are rare.

A lingering Confederation. Sometimes, when things are really dangerous, a Confederation stays united, the many caravans banding together to form an army of sorts, led by a Wayfarer Chieftan/King and his second, a Wayfarer War Chief/Warlord. However, such unions are rare. The last one happening nearly 80 years ago, and disband as soon as the threat or situation has been resolved or avoided. That's usually a matter of months to a few years. Confederations are always eager to disband and go their separate, if mutual, ways as soon as they can. The only reason Wayfarer Caravans have a Chief/King and War Chief, is for times of crisis that affect them all (or most). Once the appropriate response to a specific problem(s) has been determined or the crisis is resolved, the nation of Wayfarers disband. The main reason for the Wayfarers having a "Chief/King" and "War Chief" is to deal with outsider kingdoms that sometimes persecute them, such as The Western Empire, Timiro, Bizantium and others.

As far as Wayfarers are concerned, no one can own land, so territory is not considered as property. They feel that arguing over land is tantamount to fleas quarreling over the ownership of the dog that they occupy. While they, themselves have favorite travel routes and locations they consider to be their "stomping grounds," no Wayfarer lays claim to it. They use it, hunt on it, live on it, for a while and move on. They don't think about or care about who may pass through or use it for a while after them. Claiming the land and fencing it off is an offense to the Wayfarers, but they go with the flow and find new travel routes and places to camp. Fortunately, the Palladium World has so many open spaces that places to camp are seldom a problem. However, this is also why Wayfarers believe they have the right to fleece, cheat, rob and take advantage of the people who claim land and establish cities, towns, farms etc. To the Wayfarers' way of thinking, these "land hogs" owe them for taking the land away from everyone else.

The Caravan Master

Caravan and Clan Leader

Although the caravan has a *Council of Elders* to help govern it, it is the **Caravan Master** who is in charge of the caravan. It is he or she who makes the day-to-day decisions concerning the caravan's operations, where they travel, who they target to plunder or con, what to trade, who should be doing what to earn money and acquire supplies, where they camp, which members handle what task, whether to remain at their current location or to move on, where they go, how long they stay, when they leave,

and so on. The Caravan Master also determines what services and activities the caravan provides for *the marks*, oops, I mean, locals they intend to interact with. What supplies the caravan needs to obtain, what assets that the caravan currently has that can be sold, bartered, or traded away, and similar duties and decision making.

The Caravan Master, often just called "the Master," is like a General or business manager. He or she directs his troops, keeps them in line, keeps them focused and expects them to follow orders. The livelihood, if not the very existence, of the caravan usually rests on the shoulders of a capable Caravan Master. For a small percentage of large caravans, there may also be a *Clan Chief/King* and *Queen*, as well as a War Chief, but these are far and few. Also see Confederation.

Caravan Masters are generally chosen by the Council of Elders of the caravan. However, they may also be chosen by acclaim from the general adult population of the caravan, or, if the caravan is part of a confederation or clan, appointed by the *Clan Chief*.

Becoming a Caravan Master is primarily based on skill and experience, popularity, plus a bit of politics and a little luck. Although it is uncommon, talented individuals who were born as outsiders but eventually adopted into Wayfarer society have achieved the position of the Master. This is different from a Clan Chief where only those who are born as Wayfarers are eligible.

There are three ways in which a Master may be removed from his position:

1. The caravan's Council of Elders may call for a vote of impeachment from the general population of the caravan. Even though there are times when a Council's consent is necessary for a Master to actually enter office, the Council, per se, is not empowered to remove a Master who has taken his position. A council can only present the proposition of removal of office to the caravan, who must then vote on it, en masse. If the motion to oust the Master fails, the Council may not call for another removal attempt for awhile – the amount of time varies with the individual caravan, ranging from as low as six weeks to as high as two years but generally runs around seven months.

2. If the caravan is part of a larger group, such as a Confederation, the Clan Chief can remove the Master from his position. Furthermore, the Chief is in his rights to do this arbitrarily with no explanation provided to the Master's own caravan clan/followers. However, if the caravan Council challenges this decision, they can request convening a High Council. If the High Council meets, they can reverse the decision if the Clan Chief cannot or will not justify his decision to their satisfaction.

3. As a last resort, a member of the caravan can issue a **Mastery Challenge**. This is a *trial by combat* to determine who will be the Caravan Master. Any Wayfarer within that caravan has the right to issue a Mastery Challenge. Guests and outsiders do not, nor does any member of another caravan. Only those within the same caravan clan can issue the Mastery Challenge. The current Caravan Master must either answer such a challenge or provide a valid reason(s) not to do so to the Council of Elders, or lose his position by default.

The loser of a Mastery Challenge retains his membership to the caravan clan, but a Master who fails the challenge loses his leadership position. Oddly, this is seldom regarded as any sort of permanent black mark on his reputation, even if accused of incompetence or wrongdoing. The new Master that replaced him via the Mastery Challenge should make a point of letting him (or

her) move on and find a place within the clan. Challengers who fail just go back to their place in the caravan without ill will or vendetta against them, but that individual can never again issue a Master Challenge.

A Mastery Challenge requires the challenger to receive sanction from the Council of Elders to issue the challenge beforehand. Without such sanction, any attack upon a Caravan Master is punishable by death!

Long ago, the 'Farers realized that there would always be those who felt that the strongest warrior or the best fighter should lead. Fortunately, wiser heads who knew that the greatest fighters would not necessarily be the best leaders prevailed. Figuring that such combats involving talented and ambitious fighters were inevitable, the Wayfarer forebears set up a somewhat ritualized challenge method that required qualified candidates not just tough guys. Moreover, in order to discourage such challenges and prevent a lot of hotheads thinking that they could become leaders just because they can fight well, it was set up to favor the existing Master.

As the challenged party, the Master has three notable advantages over his challenger:

A) He gets to select the time and place where the fight will take place. There are no hard and fast rules as to when and where the fight may be as long as it is scheduled reasonably soon and at a time and date acceptable to both combatants. However, if the challenged party drags his heels or delays too long, the caravan Council of Elders may intercede and either allow the challenger the selection or themselves decide the time and place of the combat.

B) The Caravan Master gets the choice of weapons. Other than weapons of mass destruction, just about anything is allowed, provided they are acceptable to both combatants and the Council of Elders. Again, if the odds are too obviously stacked in the Master's favor due to an uncommonly powerful weapon, such as a magic item, the Council of Elders may intercede and select the weapons to be used themselves.

Most combats tend to be with the same weapon for both combatants such as sword vs sword, axe vs axe, etc., but it is allowable for the Caravan Master's weapon to be of superior quality, provided it is a weapon he has had for some time and not just acquired for the challenge. If it is agreed upon beforehand, the two combatants may each select different weapons, such as sword vs spear, axe vs sword, etc. Generally, efforts are made to ensure that the weapons for each side are more or less comparable with each other, especially if the Council is involved. Minor magic weapons are not allowed unless both combatants have them; major magic weapons, such as holy or Rune weapons, are strictly prohibited.

C) The final, and most telling, Caravan Master's advantage is in the combatant. The challenger must fight on his own behalf while the challenged Master may recruit someone else to fight in his place as his representative champion. Furthermore, the choice of the Master's surrogate is not limited to the caravan. The Master is allowed to bring in someone from outside, and they do not have to be strictly human. Thus, for example, an ambitious Enforcer might easily be the best fighter in the caravan. However, if he issues a Mastery Challenge, he may face the top Enforcer from another caravan or have to square off against a veteran Mercenary Fighter, Gladiator, Palladin, or whomever else the current Caravan Master can recruit to fight on his behalf. Monster races

are NOT allowed, but Elves and Dwarves are allowed. **Note:** Although a fair number of Wayfarers can ride, their primary use of horses is to pull their wagons, not as war mounts. Most Wayfarers are not experienced at fighting on horseback, as they generally prefer to dismount and fight on foot. If pitted against a seasoned Palladin or Knight, battle will be done on foot, not horseback. It is the only fair thing to do.

As with other challenges and competitions among the Wayfarers, the Master Challenge does not have to be to the death, and seldom is. The fight goes on until one or the other is obviously vanquished or knocked out, or requests to end the fight. In the case of a very close fight, the Council of Elders indicates the winner. Their own bias and favoritism may benefit the current Master or the challenger as the case may be, though most Councils try to be open, honest and fair. That said, their ruling is final, unless one of the combatants insists on a fight to the death and the other accepts.

The Council of Elders

The Council of Elders is somewhat of a misnomer. Although such a council does exist, it consists of the young, middle-aged and older members of the caravan, based on their useful skills and specific knowledge that benefits their nomadic band. Much of the time, the Council acts in an advisory capacity, while leaving the actual decision making to the Caravan Master. However, the Council of Elders does maintain two important rights:

1. Assigning punishment and sentencing. The task of dispensing justice for the caravan falls upon the shoulders of the Master or the Chief, if there is one. However, if the accused is found guilty, then they may appeal to the Council of Elders to mitigate the sentence decreed by the Master. In many cases, the Master sends the offender to the Council for them to administer punishment for the crime(s) for which the Master has determined he is guilty of. Note that the Council may NOT reverse the Master's pronouncement of guilt. They may only determine and assign or alter whatever punishment was given for the crime. Moreover, appealing the sentence to the Council is something of a crap shoot since the Council can not only lessen the sentence if they feel the Master was too stern but they can also add to the sentence if they feel that the Master was too lenient in his judgment.

2. The Council of Elders is also charged with ultimately approving or rejecting Caravan Masters. If the Master is killed or incapacitated to the point of being unable to do his job, or, if members of the caravan are just dissatisfied with his performance, then the Council can call for a general vote among the caravan to appoint a new Master.

Property & Possessions

Wayfarers have a somewhat different view about property than the run of most people. To them, the caravan clan and Wayfarer nation has a much higher priority on many material goods. As far as Wayfarer possessions, they are considered in the following manner:

1. Wagons. As stated earlier, Wayfarer wagons are the property of the caravan/clan. However, within the caravan, they are treated as the homes and property of those who live there. As such, the occupants have the standard rights of many homeowners, such as making alterations (i.e. home improvements) and the

right to bar anyone from entry if they so desire. This right is respected by 'Farers everywhere and can only be overridden by an order from either the Caravan Master or the Council.

2. Support the caravan clan. The general run of what is considered to be adventuring gear such as weapons, armor, torches, rope, backpacks, canteens, etc., essentially anything that is commonly used by adventuring types throughout the Palladium world, are regarded as semi-community property. Each Wayfarer has their own equipment to perform their job within the caravan, be it healing, thieving, defense or whatever, but anything that is neither in current or imminent use may be borrowed by another member of the caravan when necessary, and most of the items already in the hands of specific Wayfarers were assigned to them and provided by the Caravan Master to help them a) do their job, b) defend the caravan, and c) protect their families.

The act of borrowing requires the borrower to publicly request the loan or use of the particular item and receive consent from either the current user or from the Caravan Master or Council of Elders. This makes it clear to the members of the caravan that the possession but not the ownership of the item has been transferred to another member of the caravan with the intent and expectation of it eventually being returned, in a timely fashion, and in satisfactory condition.

The failure to receive such consent can be construed as theft, and while Wayfarers are notorious thieves, stealing applies only to outsiders NOT fellow Wayfarers. Penalties for theft can run the gamut of warnings, scoldings, beatings, whippings, cutting off a hand, banishment, or even execution, depending upon the severity of the theft and how critical the item(s) were to the well-being of the caravan.

Two exceptions to this community property rule are: A) Specific but normally generic items that have been used by a certain individual over a period of time such as a particular sword used by an enforcer or a set of lock picks used by a thief. B) If an item has been specially made for or has paid for out-of-pocket by someone, or passed down from a family member, then it belongs to them.

3. Provisions such as food and drink are also subject to being shared by all. During bountiful times, the 'Farers maintain their individual food supplies, but during hard times, everyone is subject to turning over their food to a communal pool which is then distributed throughout the caravan clan at the direction of the Caravan Master. The failure to relinquish personal food stores is subject to penalties, including a beating or short rations.

4. Wayfarers are passionate people, given to outbursts of joy and anger. They are also a generous people, at least among themselves and to their valued friends. They often share food and alcohol, and give each other gifts and other tokens of affection. A fair number of these tokens which, in and of themselves, may hold little value, are cherished and treasured as keepsakes. Although a few of these keepsakes may be buried with their owners, most of them will be passed down to relatives and become heirlooms. Wayfarers may be sentimental people but they are also pragmatic. Such heirlooms are considered to be the personal property of a 'Farer individual and his immediate family.

A possible exception to the above rule are items that are critical to the caravan clan's welfare or survival. Unless such items are patently personal property and established heirlooms, they are considered community property to be assigned by the Caravan Master for optimal use and effectiveness. With the current pos-

essor being regarded as its current user or wielder and not as its owner. It will be eventually returned.

5. Personal possessions of Wayfarers are limited to clothing, jewelry and other finery, heirlooms, tools of the person's trade, knickknacks and handmade keepsakes given to family members by other family members. And generally, a family unit/wagon will own one or two pack animals (a horse, mule or donkey), if they were to leave the caravan.

The Swapper's Code

Wayfarers have a somewhat unsavory reputation when it comes to respecting other people's property. Many outsiders believe that they automatically target all non-Wayfarers and try to swipe anything they can get away with. Such a characterization is not entirely the case.

It is true that Wayfarers are continually on the lookout for easy pickings, but most of what they "acquire" is intended for the people in their caravan, their friends and relatives. This not only removes a lot of the possible guilt from their actions, but actually makes what they do, taking things that belong to outsiders and tricking fools out of their belongings, a selfless and noble endeavor. Or so they reason.

Along these lines, all Wayfarer Thieves, Wizard-Thieves and most Wayfarers, in general, have adopted the **Swapper's Code**. This is an informal, loose-knit set of guidelines for use in their acquisition activities. Wayfarers are neither the first people nor will they be the last to "gild the lily" – i.e. put a positive spin on what are essentially criminal actions. Having the Code helps many to assuage their consciences about stealing things. Honestly, thievery and confidence games are so ingrained in their culture that most Wayfarers don't think twice about them. It's just the way things are done.

The crux of the Swapper's Code is that in exchange for whatever the 'Farer is obtaining, they should provide something in exchange. This does not have to be an item or object, it can be a service or helping hand, information, or giving their marks (victims) a memento (candy, flower, drawing, a song, etc.), or a fun evening, a thrilling adventure, sexual favor, a new experience, a warning or a fortune, or a great story to tell, even if that story is how an unnamed thief or Wayfarer made a daring or remarkable or impossible robbery. Since the Swapper's Code is so broad, it definitely favors the Wayfarer in the exchange and it almost never comes anywhere close to equal value. Or anything the victim might actually want! It is, with rare exception, that the Wayfarer invariably gives himself the best of the exchange.

Other than the Wayfarers themselves, the Swapper's Code is not known to most outsiders, not even other thieves.

It is not uncommon for Wayfarers to lend a helping hand such as to assist a townspeople, particularly prosperous looking ones, by carrying their packages and escorting them home, sometimes even graciously refusing to accept a tip, but having already picked their pocket or stolen their coin purse or one of the items. If helping a common man or poor individual the Wayfarer might provide a hard day's work for just a meal or a place to sleep, or steal an apple in exchange for his or her act of kindness. In a way, a Wayfarer feels obligated to steal something in exchange for a helping hand, even if it is a button or a feather.

Of course, letting a Wayfarer walk you home or carry packages in side or repair something is a means for the rogue to case

the home so he and his comrades can surreptitiously return later to rob the place. This also helps to establish a “moral justification” for their larcenous actions. After all, the Wayfarer provided a valuable service, transporting home packages or making a repair, so now the clan is entitled to receive some compensation for such a kind deed. Granted, they may have turned down whatever the townsperson originally offered them but that’s because the ‘Farer has a better idea of what reward will best serve him and the caravan. In fact, by accepting the help or favor of a Wayfarer is to invite robbery and chicanery.

Something as simple as the ‘Farer giving directions or even just a casual warning to be careful may be enough to be considered a useful service. After all, a timely warning can save someone’s life. If the Wayfarer decides that his brief remark is worth a hundred gold pieces or the woman’s necklace or bracelet or rings, well now, how much value does the outsider put on their life?

Besides, there are “marks” and there are “whales.” And when it comes to whales – i.e. fat cats, the rich, nobility, wealthy merchants, the clergy, politicians, bullies and those who laud their authority and power over others – they are prime targets to plunder just because of who they are. And still, a Wayfarer will swap them a little something.

However, the Swapper’s Code is a double-edged sword. The idea behind it was to set up some guidelines for thieving and make it fun and challenging, as is the Wayfarer’s Bohemian and fun nature. But also part of the Wayfarer’s code is **not to get caught** AND to try to leave the majority of outsiders with a positive attitude and fond regard for Wayfarers, even after they’ve been fleeced. Thus, they have to be very clever and friendly about how they con people out of their money and who they steal from. As a result, they generally target those who seem to be bad people, corrupt, cruel, arrogant, party-poopers, or antagonistic toward them. In short, if you are kind and friendly to Wayfarers, they go easy on you. If you are poor and kind, the “exchange” is likely to favor their mark or be a token theft that does not matter and may not even be noticed. Be a creep or a terrible person, and your home or business may be ransacked.

Thus, a townsperson from the earlier example with the packages carried home, who showed little or no gratitude toward the Wayfarer or was cruel or spiteful toward their own servants or children, is definitely a candidate for a burglary. By comparison, someone who insisted on rewarding the ‘Farer for their actions, be it giving them money, treating them to a meal, or some other act of genuine kindness, or who showed kindness to others along the way, might be given a pass or have something insignificant stolen. Of course, kind treatment by itself is no guarantee of being exempt from their larceny, especially for whales, but it is a good start.

Most Wayfarer Thieves, Wizard-Thieves, Teamsters and many Wayfarers live by the Swappers Code and never break it, except perhaps, under duress. Although there are no penalties among the Wayfarers for not adhering to the Code, those who strictly follow the Code frown upon their colleagues who do not as being lazy, careless, or dishonest. (“They’re common thieves! Not Swappers like us.”).

Language: Wayspeak

The vast majority of Wayfarers are bi-lingual, with a fair portion of them being multi-lingual. As noted previously, Wayfarers

are human. In order to get along with their fellow humans, all of them are brought up speaking the native, human language of their respective area, either Northern, Southern, Eastern, or Western, and their own secret language known as **Wayspeak**. This is necessary in order to be able to converse with fellow Wayfarers who originate from other parts of the world. Moreover, it prevents “outsiders” from being able to eavesdrop on their conversations. This secret language gives Wayfarers an advantage over outsiders because they can speak freely in front of any of them without them understanding a word. This language started out as slang and jargon that the Wayfarers developed over their centuries of travel, but quickly developed as their own, complete language. And a sort of shorthand language at that. Thus a single Wayspeak word can indicate a mark to rob, an easy target, pocket to pick, an object to palm, a specific type of danger, a warning, or action such as hide, be calm, slip into the crowd, wait until later, slip into the shadows, wait/hide until I come to get you, bring others, move the caravan, go, stop, up, down, etc.

Wayspeak has become so accepted among Wayfarers that it is their second language practiced by all and practically their first. As a secret language it is NEVER taught to outsiders, not even friends. And when outsiders are around, Wayspeak is either not spoken or spoken in hushed tones. Friends who travel with Wayfarers will pick up a few words and their meaning, but not enough to be conversant. Only those rare individuals adopted into the caravan clan are taught the basics. (**Base Skill:** 20% +4% per subsequent level of experience.)

All Wayfarer clans try to have at least one or two people who can speak whatever languages may be needed to communicate with whatever outsiders they may encounter on their travels. Besides their first languages and Wayspeak, other languages that are popular among the Wayfarers include Elven/Dragonese, Dwarven, Gobblely, and to a lesser degree, Wolfen and Faerie Speak. These last two are particularly popular among the northern Wayfarers. The more exotic languages such as Giantese are generally ignored unless a particular member of the clan might happen to know it, or develops a valuable contact who speaks such a language, making it helpful to know it. And when in a group of people that number in the scores, hundreds and possibly over a thousand, there is likely to be someone who can speak a particular language. **Note:** Both the Wayfarer Seer and Wizard-Thief possess the Tongues spell, making it possible to converse in any language when necessary.

Adoption and Family Status

Wayfarers mainly come from two different backgrounds: 1) Those who are born into Wayfarer society, and 2), Those adopted into the clan. Wayfarers are not a proselytizing people by nature. They do not actively attempt to recruit others to join their ranks. However, they are a social people, welcome newcomers and are always ready to celebrate and party with them.

Long ago, someone, probably an ancient Wayfarer King or Grand Council of Elders, decreed that Wayfarers are human and they should not corrupt or pollute their ranks with non-humans. This makes particular sense if the Wayfarers originate from Western nobility or their middle class, as people from the West tend to be human-centric and arrogant. This may be where their sense of unique identity as Wayfarers and lack of respect for authority other than themselves also arises. For many centuries only hu-

mans could become true Wayfarers. Paradoxically, though, this did not lead to a bias against the other races. Wayfarers are very tolerant and accepting of non-humans, including the so-called monster races, and take advantage of all people equally, regardless of race. A mark is a mark.

The human only attitude began to shift in more recent centuries, and today, non-humans who have started out as friends traveling with a caravan for years, and who have proven their loyalty and devotion to Wayfarers on many, many occasions, and have completely accepted their lifestyle, are, on occasion, adopted by the clan.

Anyone, whether human or not, adopted by the caravan clan is made an “official” Wayfarer with *almost* all the same rights and privileges as their fellows who were born as Wayfarers. These rights include the possibility of becoming a member of the Council of Elders or even a Caravan Master. However, Clan Chief/King and War Chief are limited to those born into the Wayfarer “family” and are not available to any adopted member of the group.

Non-humans almost never become full-fledged Wayfarers. However, they can remain indefinitely as honored **friends**. Non-humans who like to live the ‘Farer life and have proven useful, can remain with a Wayfarer caravan for years, even their lifetime. Sometimes the only difference between them and the true Wayfarers is the lack of ability to Wayspeak, and they cannot speak or vote at caravan discussions, nor can they become an Elder Councilor or Caravan Master.

In addition to adoptees and friends, there are **guests**. These are people who travel with the Wayfarers, usually for a short period of days or a few weeks before going their own way. Guests are never considered for adoption into the tribe. They are treated with hospitality but do not receive all the rights and privileges that full Wayfarers or long-time friends enjoy. On the other hand, guests are not held to the same standards nor are they subject to responsibilities within the caravan.

Caravan Disputes

Due to the Wayfarer’s “us versus them” attitude, the many different Wayfarer caravans generally trust and get along well with one another. Famously so. However, human nature being what it is, sometimes serious disagreements arise. Although some of these disagreements have led to conflict and violence, for the most part, these arguments are resolved without bloodshed and forgotten. If the principals within the disputing or warring caravans are not able to settle things peacefully among themselves, they can accept binding mediation from a group of Wayfarers that both sides are willing to accept as fair and impartial arbitrators. If that’s not possible, the dispute will be resolved at a Confederation by the Clan Chief/King or via a Battle of Champions, vendetta or blood feud.

Inter-caravan disputes taken to a Confederation are usually resolved by the Chief/King or a quorum of Caravan Masters, or by an ad hoc Grand Council of Elders generally consisting of one or two elders from several different caravan councils. The very reason why the Chief/King is chosen in the first place is to rule and resolve matters such as this. Such revered individuals are chosen for the judgement, temperament and ability to make fair and impartial decisions, and do so rather quickly.

If arbitration and all other methods of peacefully resolving a dispute between the two caravans fails, the Wayfarers still try to keep bloodshed to a minimum.

Battle of Champions

Rather than all members of the two caravans going to war, where innocent people might be hurt, the two caravans in dispute may resolve their issues in a contest of champions. A Champion is selected from each caravan to settle the issue by single combat. Or a small group (typically 4-12) of combatants from each caravan are chosen to engage in combat. Win the Battle of Champions and that caravan wins the dispute. Even then, a fight to the death may still be the last resort. If both sides to agree to it, the fight may only be to first blood or until submission instead of to the death, though people are still likely to be injured and even killed in the heat of battle. It should be noted that if both of the parties agree, they can each provide a champion(s) who is an outsider to represent their caravan, but the other battling party must also use outsiders, not members of their caravan.

Vendetta and Blood Feud

If settling a dispute via a Battle of Champions is declined, a **vendetta** or a **blood feud** may be declared. Both of these are designed to limit the fighting and the amount of bloodshed.

A **Wayfarer vendetta** is (in theory) a less serious feud in which the offending parties within each caravan clan are identified so that (again, in theory) only they and their immediate family, and they alone, are targeted in this ongoing vendetta between specific members of two different caravan clans. Those not directly involved in the dispute are considered to be non-combatants and are off-limits. Inadvertently harming neutrals will require appropriate compensation (which is usually severe) on the part of the offender. Deliberately targeting innocents is likely to escalate a vendetta into a blood feud, which nobody is likely to want to see happen. Both sides of a vendetta usually take great measures to make sure that does not happen. Blood feuds are rare, legendary and undesirable.

A Wayfarer’s vendetta may involve acts of physical violence, limited to fist fights and brawls, and maybe a non-lethal stabbing or broken arm, but not maiming or murder. Moreover, the main acts of retribution involve *getting even*. Meaning stealing (and probably re-stealing) each other’s property and valuables, acts of sabotage against each other such as taking the wheels off the other’s wagon, setting the other’s horses loose, public ridicule, spreading lies and rumors to damage the other’s reputation, and all manner of humiliating pranks.

An alternative means of making amends: Those named in a vendetta who, for any reason, whether it be contrition, cowardice, etc., do not wish to be part of an extended vendetta, may appeal to a mediator/arbitrator for an alternative means of making amends. Depending upon the situation, this may involve restitution/weregild, flogging or other corporal punishment, public humiliation, servitude, a task or quest, or whatever else the arbitrator feels would be proper recompense. If there is no mediator/arbitrator available, the petitioner may approach the Caravan Master or Clan Chief under a flag of truce and make his appeal direct to his opponents. If an agreement is accepted, the petitioner pays the price asked of him and must walk away from the vendetta and

everyone else involved (friends and family), which is likely to earn him the label of traitor. He himself may be branded a black sheep of the family, disowned or targeted by other members of his own vendetta battling side.

A vendetta ends when one side or both sides have had enough and one side gives in to the other, doing whatever is asked of them to make amends, or the two reach a mutual resolve, or just walk away and bury the hatchet.

Wayfarer Blood Feud

A blood feud is much more serious than the thieving, sabotage, brawls, and pranks of a vendetta. A blood feud is as nasty as things can get. While all the stealing, pranks and sabotage of a vendetta may take place, violence goes far beyond brawls and fist fights. Destruction of property, stabbings, maiming, rape, murder, arson, and *all-out war* are likely components of a blood feud as one side typically seeks to crush and humiliate or utterly destroy the other. This can lead to the genocide of an entire rival family bloodline.

Such feuds can last months, years or generations. Blood feuds may encompass parts of the family or clan within the caravan or the families and bloodlines of the entire caravan clan. It is often the latter.

Even those with no actual participation in the events that caused the feud in the first place, are targets and likely to become innocent victims the bloodthirsty feud. Each death of an innocent adding fuel to the fire and exasperation the hatred and violence between the two warring factions.

Anyone attempting to exclude themselves from a blood feud must formally renounce their family (this is done in the presence of the Caravan Master and/or the Council of Elders) and then they must either join the rival, feuding caravan, or leave his Wayfarer caravan forever, or until the feud is resolved. Individuals who renounce their families usually join the enemy Wayfarer caravan, pledging alliance to their “new families.” Of course when this occurs, they are expected to share family secrets and fight against their own blood, which usually makes them the most despised of enemies and targeted for death or worse. Such turncoats are seldom ever forgiven and allowed to return to the family they betrayed without some truly grand gesture. Even then they may be murdered or forever banished for their treason.

Likewise, a ‘Farer can walk away from the feud by rejecting their family without joining the enemy, but that means they must also walk away for life as a Wayfarer. Such rare individuals are seldom allowed back into Wayfarer society. Not even their offspring and future generations, so the sins of the parent haunts all future generations. To walk away from your own family is bad enough, but to walk away from the Wayfarers as a people (which walking away from a blood feud requires) is unforgivable. Furthermore, in the rare instance of someone who does re-join their previous family caravan clan, they are likely to be subjected to the challenge of an individual vendetta (but NOT a blood feud) from their own family as well as the original adversary in the feud. In the case of genocide as the resolve to a blood feud, those who fled and stay away are not likely to be sought after, but are marked for death upon their return to the fold.

A blood feud ends when one side is destroyed/exterminated or surrenders to the other side and does whatever is asked of them, not matter how extreme or unfair, to make amends. Or both decide enough is enough and call an end to the feud, though hard

feelings are likely to last for generations. In some cases, the losing family clan or caravan is absorbed into the caravan of the winning side. And in some sad cases, the two feuding caravans destroy each other.

Wayfarer Warfare

Wayfarers do not have standing armies. The nature of their nomadic lifestyle makes such a thing unfeasible. Instead, every able-bodied man, woman, and sometimes child, is expected to rise up and defend the caravan. However, most Wayfarers have just basic combat and limited weapon skills, and few, if any, have any background in military strategies and tactics. As a result, Wayfarers do not engage in large-scale warfare if they can avoid it. And they usually can.

When they find themselves in a tight situation they will try to talk and negotiate their way out of conflict. Cutting deals that may require a distasteful service or trade may be considered if it keeps them out of someone else’s war campaign. Sneaking away in the middle of the night or during a fog, is also an acceptable tactic.

Honestly, most nations never think of Wayfarers as a threat. To them they are shiftless, party animals, minstrels, fortune tellers and thieves who represent no threat to anyone. So who would want them as part of their army? These scoundrels would rob you blind before going AWOL. Or so is the common belief. Likewise, because they are regarded as friendly and harmless traveling entertainers and peasants – other than being charlatans and thieves – attached to no kingdom, they are regarded as a harmless neutral party and ignored.

When one or two Wayfarer caravans are forced to fight, usually by a local tyrant or bully, they prefer to use guerilla tactics, ambushes, traps, sabotage, hit-and-run raids and smear campaigns, instead of pitched battles. If necessary, they will try to frame the leader of their enemy to get one of his rivals or enemies to attack him, and thus get him to forget about them. On rare occasions when there is no viable alternative, assassination may be considered. All of these elements apply to Wayfarer Confederations in which a dozen or more caravans gather to make a stand to protect themselves. War with Wayfarers are so rare that no none can remember when the last one took place.

Foreign Relations

Since the Wayfarer Nation exists only in the minds of the Wayfarers, and they lay no claim to any landholding, these nomads have no official kingdom nor diplomatic relations with any true nation of the Palladium world. As noted under *Wayfarer Warfare*, above, most established kingdoms and people consider them to be little more than friendly entertainers, fortune tellers, snake oil merchants and thieves. As such, they are mostly harmless and useful for a few days amusement, news and exotic goods and services. However, just because they are not regarded as a sovereign nation or a political force to be reckoned with, it does not mean the rulers and citizens of true kingdoms are unaware of the Wayfarers’ existence. On the contrary, everyone has heard of them and most people, especially adventurers and world travelers, have encountered a band of them at least once or twice in their lifetime.

Interactions between Wayfarers and kings, princes, and High Priests are unlikely, except as a possible victim of their thievery or con games in passing or via one of the lord's henchmen. The vast majority of dealings with nobility will be at the local level, such as barons, lesser nobility, knights and servants of the people of power.

Since there is such a diversity of social levels and attitudes among nobles, there is a wide range of reactions as to how the Wayfarers are treated. This treatment runs the gamut from highly respected, liked, admired, tolerated, ignored, suspected, harassed, and persecuted. However, at the national level, or what passes as such, specific nations have traditionally dealt with Wayfarers in the following manners:

Baal-Gor Wastelands and Mount Nimro. Same as the **Old Kingdom**, described below, among *Goblins, Orcs, Ogres, Trolls, Ratlings, Quillback, Gosai* and even clans of *giants* and *Minotaur* accept and welcome Wayfarers. *Eandroth, Gromek, Quorians, Vrill* and *Lizard People* on the other hand, are not particularly fond of Wayfarers, but tolerate them only up to a point, so Wayfarers should be wary of these people. However, the pickings are much less in the Wastelands and the environment is unforgiving. As a result, the Baal-Gor Wastelands and the **Yin-Sloth Jungles** are two regions Wayfarers do not often visit.

Kingdom of Bizantium used to be tolerant, if not outright welcoming, to Wayfarers. Unfortunately, recent events such as the rebellion of the Shadow Colonies and the disastrous reigns of some of Bizantium's most recent kings, have resulted in the Bizantine authorities often suspecting the Wayfarers of being rebel spies and sympathizers. Although the Wayfarers have not yet been officially declared as enemies of the state, they are not as welcome as they formerly were.

Eastern Territory. The many different city-states and fledgling kingdoms that comprise the Eastern Territory all have their own thoughts about these mischievous rogues. They are welcomed at most locations. Their songs, dance and revelry regarded as a cheerful break from the mundane. The Wayfarers wear their welcome thin only if they get too greedy or reckless in their larcenous deeds and get themselves kicked out of town – or more likely, sneak out before the authorities investigate. Slipping away like thieves in the night. The *Danzi tribes* find them interesting but are not sure what to make of them. *Orcs and other monster races* regard them warmly the same as those in the Old Kingdom.

Isle of the Cyclops. Wayfarers are not fond of traveling over large expanses of water, so only a few small bands of Wayfarers have ever visited this remote island. No caravans are known to have ever come to the island. Besides, this is not a place for humans or thieves. **Note:** Wayfarer caravans tend to avoid all but the largest and nearest islands. They hate travel by boat/ship.

Isle of Phi. Wayfarers usually receive a warm reception on Phi Island. The Phians seem to really like these vagabonds who travel about and enjoy what life has to offer them. Wayfarer thieving on Phi is always kept at a minimum because the people are naturally friendly and generous to Wayfarers, so they, in turn, are motivated to stay on their best behavior (i.e. no stealing, minimal cheating at games of chance, few con games) to maintain their good relations with the gentle and kind people of Phi.

Island of Lopan. Everyone is welcomed on Lopan and Wayfarers are no exception. The people of Lopan are generally well-disposed toward Wayfarers, perhaps because an entire caravan seldom travels across the inland sea to the island. Thus their ex-

posure to Wayfarers and their ways is less than most other places. Lopani respect the Wayfarers as traveling entertainers, artists and seers. As long as the Wayfarers provide the citizens of Lopan valuable services such as being the disseminators of information and as entertainers who keep up their spirits, they are accepted with open arms.

Land of the Damned. Though it seems impossible and probably an unsubstantiated rumor, it is said that at least one or two Wayfarer caravans operating in the North for the last few hundred years, know a secret way to the Land of the Damned. A way in without having to climb over the mountains. These rumors also suggest 'Farers visit and trade with some of the monster races locked away beyond the Great Northern Mountains. Though Wayfarers laugh at such ridiculous stories and categorically deny them, if anyone knows about a secret way into the Land of the Damned, it is likely to be a Wayfarer clan.

Land of the South-Winds. A land of secrets, pirates, thieves and forgotten religions itself, Wayfarers are regarded as kindred spirits and nothing out of the ordinary. Here, the Wayfarers need to watch their own coin purses and beware of con artists and trouble that might be directed at them. Wayfarers who behave themselves and don't steal from the wrong person (it is best to target foreigners visiting the Land of the South Winds rather than locals, and certainly not priests!) are tolerated, while those who steal from, or antagonize, the wrong person could find himself in serious trouble, or just disappear.

Old Kingdom. Though most humans fear the Old Kingdom since it has become inundated with warring bands and tribes of Goblins, Orcs, Ogres, and other monster races, Wayfarers see it as a land of opportunity. Their famous neutrality and openness toward non-humans means even the largest Wayfarer caravans can travel across the Old Kingdom without fear of attack or reprisal from the so-called "monsters." Yes, there is the occasional threat and shakedown, but for the most part, Wayfarers are welcomed with open arms and embraced as entertainers, fortune tellers, gamblers and *friends*. Many of the non-human tribes like to party hard, drink hard, dance, sing, carouse, gamble and engage in games of skill and physical contests. And while a Wayfarer is no match for a sober Orc, Ogre or Troll warrior, they can usually get the best of a drunken one. Best of all, most of the less intelligent beings don't notice if they are getting played, swindled, cheated or conned, as long as it is done in a playful manner and comes from a smiling "friend."

This acceptance by the monster people enables Wayfarers to trade with the various war camps and bandit clans, and then go trade with the few remaining Dwarven, Elven and human cities and villages of the Old Kingdoms. It also means they can travel across the expanse of the Old Kingdom to get to the Baal-Gor Wastelands, Western Empire and other places without concern of trouble from gangs of monster. In fact, they have escaped the law and vengeful clients, by seeking refuge among a war camps of Goblins, Orcs, Ogres and others.

Ophid's Grasslands: Exactly the same as the **Old Kingdom**, described above. However, *Bug Bears* can get nasty, vicious and deadly if they lose too much or are in a foul mood.

Timiro Kingdom. Timiro has always considered Wayfarers as undesirables. However, although they regard Wayfarers to be a shiftless and dishonest lot, the Timiro government feels that the 'Farers are more of a nuisance than a threat, considering them more akin to chicken thieves instead of murderers. Just shoing

the 'Farers away seems preferable to wiping them out. Many Timiro lords have no ill feelings toward Wayfarers as long as the 'Farers stay out of their territory and remain someone else's problem.

Western Empire. Wayfarers are, generally, welcomed in the West, though they are much less tolerant of their shenanigans. This can make criminal activity dicey, requiring tight planning, care and coordinated operations by the Wayfarers in that caravan. A challenge they cheerfully accept. The many scheming and rival Western Empire nobles, merchants and power brokers in every Western city, see Wayfarers as potential spies and agents (i.e. thieves for hire). And best of all, these visiting rogues are outsiders unknown to their enemies, and they leave town after a few days or a few weeks. The perfect "agent" for spying and short-term schemes. As a result, discreet Wayfarers can find plenty of opportunity as hired spies, tails/private investigators, thieves and other agents of crime, perhaps even murder for those with the stomach for it. Work for any Western employer may not be what it seems and can have deadly consequences if caught in the act. Of course, Wayfarers love the challenge and don't plan on getting caught.

Wolfen Empire and the Great Northern Wilderness. The highly self-disciplined and military oriented Wolfen are somewhat puzzled by the Wayfarer lifestyle. Why anyone would want to just keep traveling about instead of setting down roots somewhere permanent seems counter-productive. Nor can the Wolfen relate to the thieving, con games, or frivolous, unproductive approach to life. Still, they find 'Farers intriguing, and welcome the news and rumors they bring with them as well as the portents of the future and word about the activities of humans in the Disputed Land and Eastern Territory.

The more savage *Coyles* are much less welcoming as they hate all humans and do not like or trust Wayfarers. However, because the Wolfen accept them, so do they. Of course, other than animal furs, teeth, bones and perhaps, goods stolen from their human victims, Coyles don't have much to attract Wayfarers to them. The same is true for *Northern Barbarians*.

Bearmen of the North and *Kankoran*, neither of which suffer fools easily, recognize Wayfarers for what they are and have no use for them.

Bands of *Goblins*, *Orcs*, *Ogres*, etc. embrace Wayfarers in much the same way as those described in the Old Kingdom. Like the Old Kingdom, there are plenty of opportunities for the fun-loving and politically neutral Wayfarers who visit the North. And that includes human, Elven and Dwarven hunters, trappers, traders, and adventurers.

Yin-Sloth Jungles. The Yin-Sloth Jungles is one of the few unexplored and least populated regions in the world. It is inhabited by savage tribal people and monsters, and the environment is hostile and deadly, even for Wayfarers. While some small bands of Wayfarers sometimes venture into the jungles or along the coastline, no caravan is known to have traveled this unforgiving land of swamps and dense rainforest.

Wayfarers' Stance on Magic

Mages are not very prevalent among the Wayfarers. Besides a general mistrust in dealing with things that are out of the ordinary and unable to be fully controlled, most Wayfarers do not have the discipline or desire to become a magician. Of the few who do

become mages, most opt for the *Wizard-Thief* (a thief with some wizardly abilities) or a *Seer* (a sort of Mystic unique to Wayfarers).

Occasionally, there are *Wizards* and *Psi-Mystics*, and very rarely, a *Witch* or *Necromancer*, but even they are uncommon. Mystics are generally considered to be primarily psychics instead of a practitioner of magic, with their magic powers providing back-up to their psionic abilities.

Witches are not usually welcome among most Wayfarers caravans, but one exception is when the 'Farer becomes a *Witch* in order to help or rescue the clan in a desperate time of need. However, the witch(s) will be subjected to strict scrutiny to ensure that he or she does not use such powers unchecked or against the caravan. The same holds true of the rare Wayfarer *Necromancer*.

There are neither *Diabolists* or *Summoners* among Wayfarers as they generally lack the patience and temperament required to learn these demanding forms of magic. Besides, these sorcerers as well as *Witches* and *Necromancers*, are just too grim and surly for most lighthearted and playful Wayfarers to even consider. Since Wayfarers are not religious, there are seldom *Warlocks* among them and never priests.

Wayfarers' Stance on Psionics

Unlike magic, Psionics, especially *Healing* and *Sensitive* abilities, are highly esteemed by Wayfarers. Though psionics are out of the ordinary, they also seem to be natural and a part of humanity, so they are accepted. Something that a person is born with, unlike magic which a person must seek out and learn. Thus, psychic abilities are seen as blessings and gifts.

Psychics are prized among the caravans and enjoy perks such as better food and clothing, one of the more comfortable wagons, and various other amenities. Though all Wayfarers regard each other as equals, *psychics*, *Seers*, *Psi-Healers*, *Psi-Mystics*, *Wizard-Thieves* and other psychics, as well as the *Caravan Masters*, enjoy a slightly higher status within the clan as *first among equals*.

In return, these "gifted" 'Farers are expected to use their special abilities for the good and benefit of the caravan clan, not just themselves. Indeed, because it is part of their culture, psychics are raised from birth to be service oriented and to think of themselves as protectors of their people. This takes the form of recognizing omens and flashes of insight to avoid danger and trouble, protecting the caravan, healing the sick and injured, negotiating with the locals, and earning money as fortune tellers, spiritual guides and con artists; and assisting con men and thieves by sizing up and fleecing "marks." A psychic with *Empathy* or *Telepathy* have a real advantage playing cards and selling goods because they can read their "client's" emotions or thoughts.

Wayfarers who exhibit psionic abilities are expected to hone them and use their gifts without hesitation. At some point, a young psychic will be assigned to a more experienced one to mentor and train the younger ones. If no mentors are available, a rarity as all caravans will have a few psychics, the young psychic is encouraged to develop their psychic talents on their own or the young psychic may be lent to another caravan with psychics willing to train the youngster for a year or two before being returned to his people.

Wayfarers who are Master Psychics like the *Mind Mage* are very rare and, due to their superior level of power, are a little

feared, but highly respected. The close-knit family bond combined with the one for all, all for one attitude of the Wayfarer culture usually makes such individuals loyal and reliable members of the caravan. Psi-Healers are also respected.

Wayfarers Stance on Religion

Wayfarers are not a religious people. A life on the road, of not knowing what tomorrow may bring, may be exciting but it can also be scary and fraught with danger. As a survival strategy, the Wayfarers have learned to seize whatever opportunities come their way. As a result, the majority of 'Farers have become pragmatic rather than spiritual. They tend to rely more on themselves than on some nebulous higher powers for assistance, having learned through experience that ultimately they can only truly count on themselves and other 'Farers.

It's not that they don't believe there are pantheons of gods, it's just the way they are. As nomads and world travelers, they have seen countless religions, churches and cults, all of which seem to be more interested in acquiring power and riches than spiritual guidance. Additionally, religion, like civilization and city-life, constrains and limits a person too much for any Wayfarer's taste. Religious doctrine and dogma imposes all sorts of rules, laws and responsibilities. Besides 'Farers already have the *Swapper's Code* and centuries of customs to guide them. In short, life as a Wayfarer is good, why change it?

That having been said, Wayfarers are surprisingly open and tolerant about deities and religious beliefs held by others. Visitors and guests are usually free to worship as they wish as long as it doesn't harm anyone or infringe upon the rights and freedoms of non-worshippers. In fact, they politely and respectfully allow a god or pantheon their measure of worship, and sometimes, might even offer a small donation of their own as an act of respect and kindness. "Who knows? What can it hurt?"

There is a small minority (10%) of Wayfarers who have accepted the existence of higher powers and adopted, to some degree, the worship of such powers. However, instead of a specific deity or pantheon, those among these quasi-religious 'Farers pray to a nondescript Creator and the Fates, though they find a certain appeal to trickster gods.

Wayfarer O.C.C.s

Wayfarer Enforcer
Wayfarer Healer
Wayfarer Peasant/Vagabond
Wayfarer Seer
Wayfarer Teamster
Wayfarer Thief
Wayfarer Wizard-Thief

Other O.C.C.s available to Wayfarers

Some Wayfarers do not have the ability or aptitude to become one of the specialized O.C.C.s listed above and described below, or choose to be a different occupation, probably something in the field of entertainment. Listed below are the most typical O.C.C.s chosen by Wayfarers as well as the O.C.C.s they NEVER select.

The most typical Wayfarer O.C.C.s are as follows:

Acrobat/Tumbler
Actor
Bard
Juggler/Knife Thrower
Minstrel
Psi-Healer
Psi-Mystic
Psychic Sensitive
* Thief (see Wayfarer Thief O.C.C., below)
Ranger

Never these O.C.C.s: A Priest of any kind, Warlock, Knight, Squire, Soldier, Slaver, lawman, Palladin, Noble, Diabolist, Summoner, Alchemist nor any seafaring O.C.C. Wayfarers may travel by boat to get someplace, but they have no desire to be Sailors and dislike sea travel.

Practitioners of Magic: Other than the *Wayfarer Wizard-Thief* and *Seer*, and possibly a *Psi-Mystic*, mages are very uncommon among Wayfarers.

Wayfarer Enforcer O.C.C.

Wayfarers do not have standing armies. The nature of their nomadic lifestyle makes such a thing unfeasible. Instead, every able-bodied man and women is expected to rise up and defend the caravan. However, most Wayfarers have just basic combat, one or two weapon skills and no background in military tactics. However, the Palladium World can be a very dangerous place, especially for those who travel the world on the open road. Unlike city dwellers who can take refuge behind their walls of stone, the nomadic Wayfarers have only their wooden wagons. Fortunately for the Wayfarers, their first line of protection are the formidable **Enforcers**.

Wayfarer Enforcers are recruited from the young men and women who demonstrate physical capabilities, strength and an aptitude for fighting. Such individuals are mentored by current Enforcers and friends of the caravan who possess combat experience and skills. They start with the basics, handling and cleaning weapons and equipment, running errands for the Enforcers and given chores and exercises designed to build endurance and toughen them up.

Over time, the trainees who display sufficient interest and ability to become an Enforcer/fighter for the caravan – not everyone should be a fighter – are taken to the next level of training to become full-fledged Enforcers. It is now that these Enforcers in training are taught both armed and unarmed combat, find a favorite weapon, get a suit of armor and train in earnest to be a fighter.

The recruits who are not suited to this career are weeded out and allowed to choose a different Wayfarer O.C.C. There is no negative stigma attached to someone not making the grade or choosing a different line of work to support the caravan.

Despite their job title, good Enforcers are not simply mountains of muscle or thugs ready to draw their weapons and attack their adversaries on a moment's notice. A good Enforcer is also a shrewd judge of character and skilled at assessing a situation, like a police officer, who knows when to fight and when another course of action is best. There will be times when settling a dispute or brewing trouble can be defused, quieted down with words, and when compromise or bargaining better serves to keep

the peace. Other times, intimidation tactics may suffice to make actual combat unnecessary. However, Wayfarer Enforcers are NOT shy about wrestling down, clobbering and knocking out someone with a club, or using violence and lethal weapons to keep the peace or to protect fellow Wayfarers, especially when it comes to threatening and fighting outsiders.

The primary duty of the Enforcer is to keep the peace and protect the caravan, and every member within it, from fellow Wayfarers to friends and guests. Thus, whenever the caravan's property or any of its members is threatened from someone or something outside the clan, it is the Enforcers who take action to deal with it. When combat or strong-arm tactics are called for, it is handled by the Enforcers.

As the protector of Wayfarers against outsiders and all threats, Enforcers sometimes function as a bodyguard, goon or muscle-bound thug. Since the actions of Wayfarers often skirt the local laws of outsiders, if not break them outright, there are times when all that prevents a Wayfarer from receiving a beating from "the mark" he just fleeced or robbed, or hauled off to jail, is the presence of his goon protector – the Enforcer. There are also times when a mark must be strong-armed to pay up or when a "client" gets too pushy and needs to be removed. Additionally, some Wayfarer schemes, cons and robberies require a team to accomplish it. When sheer brute strength or a canny fighter is required, one or more Enforcers are enlisted for the job.

Only when threats deemed to be too overpowering for the caravan's band of Enforcers to handle alone, do other members of the caravan clan step up to help. Wayfarer Thieves and Wizard-Thieves are likely to be among the first, but mages, psychics and others will join in without hesitation, as needed. Remember, Wayfarer clans are tight-knit, fiercely loyal family units who care about, and stand up for, each other. When an outsider(s) threatens or harms one Wayfarer, he threatens them all. And they are all ready to stand by their fellows. This means it is the Enforcer who is also responsible for handling and leading acts of retribution. Again, the Enforcer is likely to be backed up by Wayfarer Thieves, Wizard-Thieves, Seers and other Wayfarers and friends depending on the target of retribution, but it is the Enforcer, or a group of Enforcers, who formulate the plan and lead the way. This makes them a sort of tough guy, big brothers and avengers whose job is to make things right and to make those who harm Wayfarers pay for their crimes against the caravan.

On the rare occasion that half to all of the caravan needs to fight against a hostile force, it is the Enforcers who function as officers and squad leaders, guiding and leading their comrades. Fortunately, such large and serious threats are rare.

The most common threats that Enforcers handle on a regular basis are what they refer to as the **Three B's – bandits, beasts, and bigots**.

Bandits and Brigands: Although Wayfarer caravans are not known for carrying a great amount of wealth, determined or desperate bandits or raiders may decide that a hit-and-run attack on a caravan might provide them with loot or the supplies they need, especially when it comes to food, rope and basic resources. If that particular region allows slaves, brigands might take some Wayfarers prisoner with the intention of selling them to the local slavers, gladiatorial arena, or person looking for enslaved servants.

Beasts: Most animals, even predators, tend to be wary of humanoids and shy away from them. However, even an animal

that would normally steer clear of humans may, if it is starving, injured or has developed a taste for human blood, attack humanoids.

Although many animals are solitary hunters or hunt in mated pairs, others hunt in packs. Animals like a coyote that would never attack a human adult single-handed, become more confident and aggressive when other members of its pack are present and part of the attack.

In addition to ordinary animals, there are many types of large, monstrous creatures, some with intelligence ranging from animal-level to higher than human, who see humans and other humanoids as their prey. This includes animals like the Catoblepa, Chimera, Eye Killer and Peryton to the Manticore, Melech, sphinx, dragons and Entities. Some people would include such beings as Adram, Bug Bears, the canine races, Lizard Men, Scarecrows, demons, the undead, and even some Faerie Folk, in the category of "beast" or monsters.

Bigots: The Wayfarer lifestyle is very different from the rest of the civilized world. Many people find Wayfarers to be strange and puzzling, and hard to understand. And what people don't understand they fear and reject, and all too often abuse, or eliminate. The poor reputation of the Wayfarers as thieves, con artists, beggars and lazy vagabonds does not help. It only contributes to the fear and animosity felt by many outsiders, especially city dwellers.

All too often, individuals with reason to hate the Wayfarers stir up their fellow locals or convince the authorities to take action against them. This can be as simple as rejecting the wanderers and making them move on, by force if necessary, or to take some sort of action against them. The latter is usually cruel and petty harassment, name calling, brawls and destruction of property.

As a rule of thumb, the bigotry and level of harassment is always worst when the bigots wield some measure of power, such as constables, soldiers, mercs, clergy, politicians and the wealthy. The worst bigotry and trouble seems to happen in cities and "civilized" areas, rather than out in the country or wilderness. While troublemakers at a local city or town are not usually skilled in combat, they are likely to have the advantage in numbers. Plus, whatever passes for the law is likely to side with locals rather than Wayfarers. When armed with pitchforks, staffs, and cudgels and aroused to a fighting pitch, even a group of rabble can be a formidable adversary.

The other duty of the Enforcer is to help keep the peace within the caravan. Wayfarers are a passionate people, and when tempers run hot or someone has had a little too much to drink, a dispute can quickly flare up into violence. It is the Enforcer's task to break up brawls (prevent them if possible), help settle disputes, and keep people in line. Much like modern-day police officers, Wayfarer Enforcers handle domestic disputes and day-to-day disagreements and quarrels between other Wayfarers. The best Enforcers, head them off before they can escalate.

Whether a situation needs a stern warning, a moment to cool, a bop on the head, a helping hand, or something much more forceful, an Enforcer's commonsense approach is usually welcomed by fellow Wayfarers. If an Enforcer can resolve an argument between two neighbors before fists fly, great. If he can get them to shake hands after a few punches (or threats) have been thrown, that's a win too.

As a peacekeeper, the Enforcer tries to prevent violence and bring squabbles to a satisfactory resolve before violence or requiring the involvement of a Caravan Master or the Elder Council. Whenever a member of the caravan breaks the peace or flouts the laws of the clan, it is the task of the Enforcers to take care of the matter. Likewise, it is the Enforcer's job to apprehend malefactors and bring them to justice, as well as see to it that any judgment passed against someone is enforced/carried out. As noted earlier, this may include avenging a wrong committed by an outsider against the caravan or an individual Wayfarer. In this case, the Enforcer becomes judge, jury and imposes the retribution. Killing someone, even an outsider, is usually avoided, as there are better ways to punish and avenge without taking a life. However, if necessary, the Enforcer has the authority to kill an outsider – but not a fellow Wayfarer. Death sentences must come from the Council of Elders or the King/Chief at a Confederation gathering.

Two common practices to settle disputes is making amends with restitution and trial by combat. Though as noted earlier, fights to the death are seldom sanctioned or necessary.

As someone who fills the roles of warrior, police, bodyguard, protector, strongman, pit bull and goon, many Enforcers are large, muscular, imposing figures who can intimidate people without saying a word, but others are small or thin. It's not the body size or mass that counts most, it's having the right mindset and ability. Thus, the best Enforcers are fast-thinking fighters with an eye for danger, a head for strategies and tactics, the ability to think several moves ahead, skill with two or more weapons, agility, and an enjoyment of fighting if not a killer instinct. As a result, a full third of Wayfarer Enforcers are women.

Wayfarer Enforcer O.C.C. Stats:

Attribute Requirements: P.S. 14 or higher. A decent I.Q., and a high M.A., P.P. and P.E. are helpful but not required.

Alignment: Scrupulous (5%), Unprincipled (25%), Anarchist (50%), or Aberrant (15%), but even those with evil alignments are completely loyal to their fellow Wayfarers.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +4D6 to S.D.C., +1D4 to P.S. or to P.P., +1 to P.E., +1D6 to speed, +3 on Perception Rolls to spot and assess potential trouble, danger, and combat situations; +2 on initiative, +3 to pull punch, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor. These are in addition to bonuses from combat training, Weapon Proficiencies and other skills.

O.C.C. Skills:

Athletics (General) or Body Building, pick one.

Boxing

Dance (+10%)

Horsemanship: General (+5%)

Language: Native Tongue at 90%.

Language: Wayspeak at 88%.

Language: One of choice (+30%).

Military Etiquette (+5%)

Palming or Concealment (+5%), pick one.

Pick Locks or Prowl (+10%), pick one.

Streetwise (+14%)

Surveillance or Math: Basic (+10%); pick one.

W.P.: Three of choice (any).

Hand to Hand: Expert, can be changed to Hand to Hand: Martial Arts at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or to Assassin (if evil) for the cost of two.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Choose two Physical skills and three other skills at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels 3, 5, 8, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Domestic: None.

Espionage: Any (+5%).

Horsemanship: Exotic Animals (+10%), only.

Medical: First Aid only (+5%).

Military: Any (+10%).

Naval: None.

Physical: Any (+5% where applicable).

Rogue: Any (+5%).

Science: None.

Scholar/Technical: Any.

Weapon Proficiencies: Any, except Siege Weapons.

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select two Secondary Skills from the previous list at level one, and one additional skill at levels 4, 7 and 10. All new skills start at first level proficiency. These additional areas of knowledge do not get the advantages of the bonuses listed in the parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing (one for combat, one plain), boots, a pair of gloves, belt, purse, backpack, one large sack, 1D4 small pouches or sacks, a waterskin, lock picking tools, 50 feet (15.2 m) of rope, grappling hook, 1D6 wooden spikes, a mallet, a tinder box, and some personal items.

Armor: Starts with heavy armor. Roll percentile to determine which: 01-50% A suit of chain mail (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 44) or 51-100% A full suit of plate and chain (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 100). This is in addition to a suit of studded leather armor (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 28) for missions that require stealth.

Weapons: A silver-plated knife, a shield, and two weapons for each W.P., and all are basic S.D.C. weapons of good to excellent quality. All Enforcers covet magic weapons, but such rare commodities are usually given only to the top Enforcers who may have one or two magic weapons and a potion or two.

Money: The character starts with 200 gold, one basic healing potion and a good quality riding horse. **Note:** Most Enforcers enjoy the good life and tend to spend money quickly and freely on life's pleasures and extravagances.

Wayfarer Healer O.C.C.

Travel, at best, is a risky proposition. Not only is the possibility of injury or death ever present, but disease too. A virulent disease can wipe out a caravan in a matter of days. Often the only line of defense between the survival of a Wayfarer caravan or clan and the forces that would decimate it is their healer.

Some Healers possess psionic abilities of healing while others rely strictly upon their knowledge and skills. In either case, they are among the most highly regarded and respected members of a Wayfarer caravan.

In the strictest sense, Wayfarer Healers are not like physicians in the so-called civilized nations. Since they rely less on operating upon the physical body and more on home remedies and brews based on legends and lore, most surgeons in places like the Western Empire, Bizantium, and Timiro, among others, would not consider Wayfarer Healers to be doctors at all. But rather as

glorified herbalists and apothecaries. Wayfarers see this opinion as rigid and narrow-minded, because they know how skilled their Healers really are.

Most (70%) Wayfarer Healers have some degree of psionics, making them more or less *Psi-Healers*. Upon discovering someone possesses the psychic potential for healing, the caravan clan encourages the person to develop those powers and become a Healer. It has become a common practice for such individuals to be assigned to serve as unofficial apprentices to experienced Healers who can help focus and refine the psionic and healing talents of the younger person.

There is no established hierarchy among Wayfarer Healers. When two or more Healers are working together, they determine their pecking order among themselves. Experience, skill, age, and psionic ability are the determining factors of who's on top and who is not. The senior Healers are not necessarily the oldest ones, and will take the lead but, if a junior healer disagrees on a course of action set out by a senior, the junior is under no obligation to follow this course, particularly if their psionics are more powerful than those of the senior.

The Healers are so respected and have such status and authority within the caravan that their medical decisions are considered nearly equal to the orders from the Caravan Master. Members of the caravan show their respect and appreciation by leaving little gifts of food, candy, wine, herbs, and basic goods, as well as perform favors, hunt for herbs, and help with chores around the wagon.

Psionic Powers of the Wayfarer Healer:

Random roll of percentile dice or select one of the following:

01-30% No psionics. However, such characters get the bonus skills of Dowsing (+10%) and Preserve Foods (+10%), and select two additional Medical skills, plus receives an additional +10% bonus to ALL Medical and Science skills because of their extra dedication and effort to compensate for not having psionic powers like their colleagues.

31-70% Minor Psionic: Select three psionic healing powers from the Healing power category. **I.S.P.:** 3D6 plus M.E. number. Add 1D6 I.S.P. for each level of experience. **Bonuses:** +1 to save vs disease and poison, +1 to save vs magic, +1 to save vs magic sicknesses and curses, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

71-90% Major Psionic: Select a total of six powers. Either all six are from Healing or four are Healing and two are from Sensitive or Physical. **I.S.P.:** 1D4x10 plus M.E. number. Add 1D6+1 I.S.P. for each level of experience. **Bonuses:** +2 on Perception Rolls involving medicine, brewing, herbs, poisons, treating injuries and ailments, +2 to save vs disease and poison, +1 to save vs magic, +1 to save vs magic sicknesses and curses, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

91-00% Master Psionic: Select eight Healing psionics, two Sensitive, two Physical, and one Super Psionic power of choice.

Select one additional ability from each of the categories of Healing, Sensitive and Physical at levels 2, 4, 7, 9, 11 and 13, and one *Super Psionic* ability at levels 3, 5, 8, 12 and 15. **I.S.P.:** 1D6x10 plus M.E. number, +10 I.S.P. for each level of experience. **Bonuses:** +3 on Perception Rolls involving medicine, brewing, herbs, poisons, treating injuries and ailments, +3 to save vs disease and poison, +1 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs magic sicknesses and curses, and +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Wayfarer Psi-Healer O.C.C. Stats:

Attribute Requirements: M.E. 13 or higher. A high I.Q. and P.E. are helpful but not required. Less than 5% of Wayfarer Healers are literate in any language.

Alignment: Any, although most are Scrupulous (15%), Unprincipled (35%), Anarchist (35%), or Aberrant (10%) and are completely loyal to their people regardless of alignment.

O.C.C. Skills:

Biology (+20%)

Brewing (+20%)

Dance (+5%)

Holistic Medicine (+20%)

Identify Plants & Fruits (+20%)

Language: Native Tongue at 90%

Language: Wayspeak at 80%

Language: Two of choice (+10%).

Math: Basic (+20%)

Palming or Pick Locks or Concealment (+5%), pick one.

Sewing (+15% and includes suturing).

Use and Recognize Poison (+10%)

W.P.: Knife

W.P.: Targeting (throwing knives and slings)

Hand to Hand: Basic; can be changed to Hand to Hand: Expert at the cost of three O.C.C. Related Skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Choose four (two, if psionic) other skills at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Espionage: None.

Horsemanship: General only.

Medical: Any, but see O.C.C. skills.

Military: None.

Naval: None.

Physical: Climbing, Running and Swimming only.

Wrestling, Acrobatics, and Gymnastics.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any (+5%).

Scholar/Technical: Any.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Blunt, W.P. Paired Weapons (usually knives), W.P. Staff, and W.P. Sword (usually a short sword) only.

Wilderness: Any (+10%).

Secondary Skills: The Healer also gets to select one Secondary Skill from the previous list at level 2, 4, 6, 8 and 12. All new skills start at first level proficiency. These additional areas of knowledge do not get the advantages of the bonuses listed in the parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing (one for traveling, one fancy), a hooded cloak or robe, a medical gown, bright colored bandanna, bright colored scarf, boots, belt, purse, backpack, one large sack, 1D3 small pouches or sacks, a waterskin, a set of cutlery, a set of spoons and forks, a ladle, a pan, 4 pots of various sizes, a small silver cross worn on a chain or as a brooch, 2D4 six inch wooden stakes, 2D6 cloves of garlic, 1D6 wolfbane, 1D4 mandrake roots, spices, salt, ground pepper, dill, thread and sewing needles, a magnifying glass, a lantern, mirror, flint and a tinder box and a medical kit.

Medical Kit Description: It contains a pestel and mortar, soap, towels, small knives for precision cutting/surgery, a handsaw, hammer, pliers, surgical sewing kit, ball of string, 2D6 rawhide strips each two feet (0.6 m) long, 1D4 sets of splints, 2D4 rolls of cloth bandages, two small bowls, two small glass jars, two small sacks, a small mirror, a small bottle of honey, holistic herbs, teas, salves and ointment for pain and healing. It is all carried in a satchel.

Armor: Starts with soft leather (A.R. 10, S.D.C. 20).

Weapons: A silver knife, a pair of throwing knives, a small hand axe, and one weapon per W.P. All are basic S.D.C. weapons of fair to good quality.

Money: The character starts with 1D4x100 gold, plus 1D4 bottles of moonshine, 2D4 chickens and a goat. **Note:** Most Wayfarer Healers enjoy the good life and tend to spend money quickly and freely on life's pleasures and extravagances.

Wayfarer Peasant/Vagabond

This is the Average Joe Wayfarer who is an entertainer and does a little bit of stealing, physical labor, animal care, putting up and taking down camp, and whatever needs to be done. Peasant/Vagabonds are just carefree gypsy-like wanderers who grew up in Wayfarer society and love their way of life. All share the same bohemian spirit, dislike for authority, live by their wits, and have a bit of larceny in their hearts. These rogues make a living as entertainers, jugglers, minstrels, artists, laborers, gamblers and thieves.

Wayfarer Peasant/Vagabond O.C.C.

Alignment: Principled (2%), Scrupulous (13%), Unprincipled (35%), Anarchist (30%), Aberrant (10%), Miscreant (8%) and Diabolic (2%).

Attribute Requirements: None, though most are reasonably intelligent and hardy.

O.C.C. Wayfarer Vagabond Bonuses: +3D6 to S.D.C., +1D4 to M.A., +1 to M.E., +1D4 to P.S. or P.P. (pick one), +1 on Perception Rolls to recognize an easy mark or opportunity for an easy steal, +1 on initiative, +1 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +1 to pull punch, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

O.C.C. Skills:

Animal Husbandry (+10%)

Art or Sculpting & Whittling (+5%)

Card Shark or Sing(+10%)

Climb/Scale Walls (+5%)

Dance (+15%)

Juggling or Rope Works (+10%); pick one.

Land Navigation or Math (+5%); pick one.

Language: Native Tongue at 90%.

Language: Wayspeak 85%

Language: One of choice (+10%).

Palming or Concealment (+5%)

Pick Pockets or Pick Locks (+5%); pick one.

Prowl or Surveillance/Tailing (+5%); pick one.

Sing or Play Musical Instrument (+15%); pick one.

Swimming (+10%)

W.P.: One of choice (any).

Hand to Hand: Basic, but can be changed to Hand to Hand: Expert at the cost of two O.C.C. Related Skills.

Note: Performance arts (dancing, singing, juggling, music, public speaking) are all professional quality.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Choose three other skills at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels 3, 7, 11, and 15. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%), except Cryptography and Writing.

Domestic: Any (+10).

Espionage: Camouflage only.

Horsemanship: General or Teamster only (+5%); pick one.

Medical: Brewing and First Aid only (+10%).

Military: None.

Naval: None.

Physical: Any, except Boxing.

Rogue: Any.

Science: None.

Scholar/Technical: Language, Breed Dogs, and General Repair, only (+5%).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any, except Forked, Paired, and Siege Weapons.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select one Secondary Skill from the previous list at levels 3, 7, 11 and 15. All new skills start at first level proficiency. These additional areas of knowledge do not get the advantages of the bonuses listed in the parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing (one for traveling, one flashy), bright colored bandanna, bright colored scarf, boots, a pair of soft leather gloves, belt, purse, backpack, one large sack, 1D4 medium sacks, 1D4 small pouches or sacks, a waterskin, lock picking tools, 50 feet (15.2 m) of rope, grappling hook, 1D4 wooden spikes, a small wooden mallet, pocket mirror, and a tinder box. **Note:** Wayfarers are snappy and stylish dressers. Thieves tend toward black and dark colors with splashes of golds and reds when on the job, otherwise they wear more flamboyant clothing and love silk shirts and scarves (the latter can be used to cover the lower part of the face), hooded capes and cloaks, leather goods such as armbands, gloves, boots, and vests, floppy hats with feathers or other ornamentation, rings and jewelry.

Weapons: A blackjack or other blunt weapon, a knife (1D6 S.D.C. damage) and an additional weapon for each W.P. All are basic S.D.C. weapons of fair to good quality. Unlikely to acquire higher quality Kobold and Dwarven weapons or magic items, unless a taskmaster.

Armor: Starts with no armor or soft padded armor (A.R. 8, S.D.C. 15).

Money: 2D4x10 gold, 1D4 skins of wine and one bottle of basic Wayfarer moonshine. Like most Wayfarers, these characters enjoy the good life and tend to spend money freely and quickly on gambling, jewelry and life's pleasures and extravagances.



Wayfarer Seer O.C.C.

When a Wayfarer caravan arrives at a city, town, or village, it is inevitable that people flock to have a Seer tell their fortune by reading their palm, aura, tea leaves or bones, or by speaking to spirits. Given that the Palladium world is home to a variety of Supernatural Beings, Creatures of Magic, and individuals who wield magical and psionic energies, the concept of someone being able to glimpse the future and offer helpful warnings and advice is not difficult to accept. And Wayfarer Seers are said to be among the best at divining the future.

While some people believe this is just a convincing Wayfarer hoax or trick to con people out of their money (which is often the case), there are many others who believe the Seer can truly glimpse the future. And they are willing to pay handsomely to learn what life holds in store for them. Indeed, the Seer's wagon or tent is one of the most profitable, year round.

Among some academic circles there have been debates as to why there seems to be such a higher number of Seers among the Wayfarers compared to other segments of the human population. Some simply dismiss them out of hand as frauds, while other have their theories, though some of them are far-fetched. For example, some scholars believe the Wayfarers have more psychics and Seers because they are so open and embrace everyone and everything around them, that it makes them more attuned to the psychic world. Other learned men wonder if Wayfarers who are known to travel through the Baalgor Wasteland and the fabled Old Kingdom, may have been exposed to magical energy that has gifted them with paranormal abilities. The more religious-minded scholars fear their "gift"

might come from a Slumbering Old One or a trickster god. And the debate rages on.

As for the Wayfarers themselves, they have not been forthcoming with any explanations or theories. They simply smile, shrug, and accept their lot.

Whenever outsiders seek out Wayfarer Seers, the question becomes not whether the psychic has psionic abilities, but whether they are actually glimpsing the future or are shining on their customers. Telling a client what they want to hear is part of the scam. And the best fortune tellers can get people coming back over and over again to receive "life changing" advice and knowledge. Since all outsiders are "marks" – suckers to be fleeced without them ever realizing they have been sheered – Wayfarer con artists posing as fortune tellers as well as actual Seers are among the best at getting repeat business. Whether male or female, young or old, all Seers have a convincing "act" and personal routine to entice customers to them, make them believe in them, and encourage them to return.

The best fortune tellers are completely convincing, sincere and kind whether they are shrewd charlatans or the genuine article sharing real visions of the future. Moreover, they have a long tradition of trying to do no harm and offering "good" advice and positive motivation to do good in the world — and to spend money with the Wayfarers.

In Wayfarer society, Seers (and other psychics such as *Psi-Healers*, *Psi-Mystics* and especially the rare *Mind Mage*, all of whom are found among the Wayfarers in small numbers) are highly respected. They are valued advisers and counselors. Thanks to their ability to peer into the future, many caravans and individual Wayfarers have avoided trouble or reaped a profit thanks to some

timely omen and advice from their caravan's Seer(s). Some caravans will not make a major decision without first consulting one of the Seers among them.

That having been said, *Caravan Masters* and *Clan Chiefs* have learned to be wary of advice from Seers. The future is not written in stone nor are the visions and omens of the Seers ever clear or exact. They are almost always imprecise and cryptic. Subject to a wide range of interpretations. The problem is the veracity of the Seers' visions and insights vary by a great amount. They truly see glimpses of the future, but a glimpse is not the whole picture, and events in the here and now can change the future. The signs and portents of things to come received by Seers are always open to a wide range of interpretations and may be tempered by what the Seer also felt or sensed at the time.

The best Seers are the ones who learn to correctly recognize and understand what they see and feel, and who are willing to adjust their predictions based on new information and new psychic insights. Sadly, there can be times when a Seer imparts their vision and wisdom as best as they can with a sincere desire to help, but accidentally guides the receiver of that information into ruin due to incorrect interpretation or change of events. Thus, Seers are deliberately vague or simply present what they see and feel, but let the person(s) receiving the information interpret the meaning and how to act upon it. Moreover, Seers are quick to warn people that the future is fluid and ever-changing.

Overall, Wayfarer Seers have been helpful far more often than not, and remain an important part of Wayfarer society.

Wayfarer Seer O.C.C. Special Abilities & Bonuses:

1. Sense Supernatural Evil: Seers are keenly aware of the supernatural world around them. As a result, they can sense the presence of supernatural evil forces. **Range:** 300 feet (91.4 m) plus 20 feet (6 m) per level of experience, though they cannot usually pinpoint the creature(s) or danger, or see its face.

The Seer can also sense the approach of great evil and danger, including an Alien Intelligence, wicked god(s), or demon lord(s). This ability will come as a feeling of dread and a prophetic dream at least 72 hours in advance of the real danger.

2. Read Palms: By looking at a person's palm, the Seer gains a form of Clairvoyance and See Aura combined. The seer can tell the following:

- Estimate the person's general alignment (good, selfish, evil) and general level of experience. Low (1-3), medium (4-7), high (8 and up).
- Get a feeling about the person's general state of mind (happy, sad, troubled, worried, scared, in love, burns with vengeance, etc.) and is able to counsel him in general terms. "Be happy, you deserve it, but remember there are those who will want to take away your happiness." Or, "I see you are troubled. What bothers you child?" Or, "I see there is something you must do to lift a great weight from your shoulders." Or, "Revenge is seldom the answer. Please think hard about this before you continue down the path of vengeance, for I fear it will not quiet your soul nor bring you peace. Only more sorrow." And so on.
- The Seer can see if the person is possessed.
- Recognize "the signs" of evil, and is able to tell, by examining the subject's palm, if he is a vampire, werebeast, demonic shapechanger, or wicked supernatural being that has taken/metamorphed into human/humanoid (Elf, Dwarf, etc.) form.

This ability does not include humans metamorphed by magic, Changelings, or Dragons.

- Estimate age within 2D4 years. This means the seer can recognize creatures that are hundreds (or thousands) of years old even though they may look young and ordinary.
- Sense high P.P.E. (200 or more points).

Notes: By using the psionic power of Clairvoyance while holding and examining the person's palm, the Wayfarer Seer *may* glimpse something in that person's possible future. The impression is usually vague, like "I sense conflict or danger," or "good fortune," or "you will find what you are looking for," or "you will be challenged," or "you will have to make an important decision," or, "your destiny awaits you in the North (South, or wherever)," or, "you think your destiny is in the North, and mayhaps it does, but first there is something you must do (or find, or get, etc.) at (something vague or a specific place), or even, "I see a man (or woman, or monsters) in a red cape. He/she/it is not a friend (or, seeks to harm you)." And similar.

The Seer's insight is usually based on events already in motion and that are likely to transpire within the next few days or weeks. Occasionally, the Seer may actually see an image of some event or villain or monster, involving the character(s). This is always provided at the Game Masters's discretion. Use this as a means to nudge the story forward, accelerate the pace, send the characters in the right direction, or to offer them helpful clues, hints or warnings.

Lastly, even low level Wayfarer Seers are trained to have a poker face and not reveal what they see by their own reaction; i.e. the Seer doesn't show shock or fear when he sees he is reading the palm of someone or something horribly evil and dangerous.

3. Psionics of the Seer: In addition to Sense the Supernatural and Read Palms, the Seer possess some other psionic abilities. They start with the following:

Clairvoyance (4), Object Read (6), Presence Sense (4), Sixth Sense (2), and See Aura (6).

At experience levels 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15, the Seer develops one additional psionic power. Select one from the categories of Sensitive or Physical. Considered a Master Psychic.

4. I.S.P.: Roll 1D6x10 I.S.P. and add it to the character's M.E. attribute number for base Inner Strength Points (I.S.P.), +1D6+3 per level of experience. The Seer is considered to be a Master Psionic and saves vs psionic attack on a roll of 10 or higher.

5. Magic Spells of the Seer: Like the Psi-Mystic, the Wayfarer Seer also intuitively knows a handful for magic spells, though not as many as the Mystic. At level one experience, the Seer knows the following spells: Calling (8), Death Trance (1) and See the Invisible (4).

At level three: Exorcism (30).

At level four: Tongues (12).

At level six: Eyes of Thoth (8).

At level eight: Constrain Being (20).

At level ten: Dispel Magic Barriers (20).

At level 12: Oracle (30).

At level 14: Remove Curse (140).

P.P.E.: Because Seers are able to cast a limited number of spells, they possess P.P.E. required to cast magic. The character's permanent P.P.E. base is 1D6x10 plus the Seer's P.E. attribute number, and +1D6 per each additional level of experience. The spells simply come to the Seer as they grow in experience.

6. Bonuses: +1 to M.A. and +1D4 to M.E. attributes, +2 on Perception Rolls related to omens (good and bad), danger, the supernatural and magic; +1 to save vs magic, +3 to save vs possession and insanity, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, and +1 spell strength at levels 3, 7, 10 and 13.

Wayfarer Seer O.C.C. Stats:

Attribute Requirements: M.E. 14 or higher. A high I.Q. and P.E. are helpful but not mandatory. Only 10% of Seers are literate in any language.

Alignment: Any, although most are Unprincipled (30%), Anarchist (30%), or Aberrant (30% and completely loyal to their people).

O.C.C. Skills:

Brewing (+15%, includes making moonshine).

Concealment or Palming (+10%).

Dance (+15%)

Dowsing (+10%)

Language: Native Tongue at 96%.

Language: Wayspeak at 90%

Language: Two of choice (+20%).

Lore: Demons & Monsters (+20%)

Math: Basic (+20%)

Sing (+10%) or Play Musical Instrument of choice (+10%).

Streetwise (+16%) or Holistic Medicine (+12%).

Wilderness Survival (+20%)

W.P.: One of choice (any).

Hand to Hand: Basic, but can be changed to Hand to Hand: Expert at the cost of two O.C.C. Related Skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Choose two other skills at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Espionage: Any (+5%).

Horsemanship: General.

Medical: First Aid or Holistic Medicine only (+5%).

Military: None.

Naval: None.

Physical: Climbing, Running and Swimming only.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any (+10%).

Scholar/Technical: Any (+10%).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any, except Archery and Siege Weapons.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: The character gets no Secondary Skills.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing (one for traveling, one flashy), a hooded cloak or robe, bright colored bandanna, bright colored scarf, walking stick or staff, purse, backpack, one large sack, 1D4 small pouches or sacks, two waterskins (one with drinking water, one with holy water), 1D6 wooden stakes, a small wooden mallet, a silver cross, pocket mirror, and a tinder box. **Note:** Of all the Wayfarers, the Seers are dressed the most demure. However, the character is likely to wear 2D4 rings, bracelets, necklaces, pins, earrings, and other jewelry.

Armor: Starts with soft leather (A.R. 10, S.D.C. 20).

Weapons: A dagger, a sling (with 3D6 sling stones and/or bullets) and one additional weapon of choice.

Money and Valuables: The character starts with 1D6x100+180 gold, 1D6x100 worth of jewelry and has 1D4 skins of wine and 1D6 bottles of basic Wayfarer moonshine, and 1D4 bottles of the superior moonshine. Likely to acquire some magic potions, magic fumes, Faerie Food and maybe a lesser magic weapon or magic item. **Note:** Unlike most Wayfarers, the Seer is usually conservative and quite frugal and plans for the future.



Wayfarer Teamster

As their title implies, Teamsters drive wagons, carts and handle the animals of the Wayfarer caravans. This makes them a vital part of every Wayfarer operation. Since their lives are so connected to their wagons, all adult Wayfarers are trained to handle horses and drive horse drawn wagons. However, the experts and the ones who lead the way and drive cattle, especially through rough terrain and in harsh conditions, are the Teamsters.

In some ways, Teamsters are the skilled jacks-of-all-trades of the Wayfarer caravan. In addition to handling the horses and wagons, they also supervise the maintenance of the wagons, hitches and gear, and care for the horses as well as set up campsites, haggle with the locals, help with the cooking, and do handyman work. In addition, teamsters are called upon to act as support and back-up for their more specialized brethren. As a result, Teamsters may find themselves acting as lookouts for the thieves, functioning as nurses for the Healers, serve as extra muscle for the Enforcers, act as pitchmen for the dancers and entertainers, and do whatever else needs to be done.

Although some teamsters chafe at their relative lack of status within Wayfarer society, particularly compared to Seers, Healers, and Enforcers, most of them are content with their roles and the knowledge that they are integral to the community. The majority of teamsters know that their comrades who often reap the glory

would find many of their tasks far more difficult, if not insurmountable, without their aid. The teamsters are the backbone of Wayfarer society and the glue that keeps things together.

Teamster O.C.C. Stats:

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 9 or higher and P.S. 12 or higher.

A high P.P. and P.E. are helpful but not required.

Alignment: Unprincipled (40%), Anarchist (45%), or Aberrant (10%), but even those with evil alignments are completely loyal to their fellow Wayfayers.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +2D6+6 to S.D.C., +1 to M.A. +2 to P.S., +2 to P.E., +3 on Perception Rolls involving horses, livestock, wagons, and carpentry, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

O.C.C. Skills:

Animal Husbandry (+20%)

Barter (+15%)

Carpentry (+25%)

Cook (+15%)

General Repair & Maintenance (+15%)

Horsemanship: General (+15%)

Land Navigation (+15%)

Language: Native Tongue at 88%.

Language: Wayspeak at 82%

Language: One of choice (+10%).

Math: Basic (+5%)

Sign Language (+5%) or Cardshark (+12%)

Streetwise or Horsemanship: Exotic Animals (+10%).

Surveillance (+15; includes tailing).

Teamster (+25%)

W.P.: Two of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic. Can be changed to Hand to Hand: Expert at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill or two skills to pick Martial Arts or Assassin (if evil).

O.C.C. Related Skills: Choose three other skills at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any except Cryptography.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Espionage: None.

Medical: First Aid only (+5%).

Military: None.

Naval: None.

Physical: Any.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Astronomy & Navigation, and Mathematics only (+5%).

Scholar/Technical: Any, (+10% to Breed Dogs and Whittling, only).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+10%).

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select two Secondary Skills from the previous list at level one, and one additional skill at levels 4, 7 and 10. All new skills start at first level proficiency. These additional areas of knowledge do not get the advantages of the bonuses listed in the parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing (one for traveling, one flashy), bright colored bandanna, bright colored scarf, boots, a pair of gloves, belt, purse, backpack, one large sack, 1D2 small pouches or sacks, a waterskin, pocket mirror, sets

of bridles and hitches for each of his animals, a tinder box and tool box with basic woodworking/wheelwright tools (hammer, wooden mallet, saw, nails, etc.). **Note:** Wayfarers are snappy and stylish dressers, but Teamsters are among the most stylish. They love leather and usually wear leather vests, gloves, boots, and armbands, like brimmed hats, and tend to wear white, red, brown and black garments with splashes of golds and silver.

Armor: Starts with soft leather (A.R. 10, S.D.C. 20).

Weapons: A dagger, a whip, and one weapon for each W.P.; all are basic S.D.C. weapons of fair to good quality.

Money and Valuables: The character starts with 1D4x100 gold, plus personally owns 2 stout workhorses (or mules, if preferred), one quality riding horse, and the gear that goes with them. These are in addition to the animals he may be in charge of on behalf of the caravan. Additional horses, cattle and livestock may be acquired over time.

Teamster Skill (Horsemanship): The character can skillfully hitch, harness and use a team of horses to drive a wagon or other vehicle, such as a coach, cart, chariot, etc., that is drawn by an animal or team of animals, with horses, mules and oxen being the most common. Teamsters also have a rudimentary knowledge in the care of said animals and the ability to make simple repairs such as replacing a thrown wheel.

The Teamster skill basically covers wheeled vehicles, whether with two or four wheels. A teamster can drive a vehicle without wheels, like a sledge or sleigh, but at -5%, and when attempting to manage exotic animals like, bison, water buffalo, elephants, Pegasus, Silonar, etc., he is -10%.

Base Skill: 40% +5% per level of experience. The Herding skill adds a +5% bonus if oxen pull the wagon.

Wayfarer Thief O.C.C.

Wayfarers have their own ideas regarding the ownership and possession of property, and fair trade. Outsiders refer to these people as thieves, con artists and worse things. While Wayfarers see their actions as the re-distribution of wealth and resources to those in need (namely themselves and their caravan), fair swaps and playful fun.

The job of the Wayfarer Thief is to acquire valuables and items that will, **a**) help their caravan clan, **b**) line their own pockets (but the clan comes first) and **c**) prove to their fellow Wayfarers how much more clever they are than the “marks” they trick, cheat and rob. For the Wayfarer Thief, stealing is not only second nature, it is their calling and joy. It is important to note that Wayfarer Thieves are not brutal thugs, muggers or cutthroats, they are “artists” and entertainers skilled in the arts of misdirection, palming and theft. They may, on occasion, use threats of violence, but they seldom use strong-arm tactics or physically hurt anyone to achieve their goals. Any punk and musclebound bully can do that. Wayfarer Thieves eschew violence in favor of cunning and finesse. They believe that resorting to hurting someone to accomplish a robbery is a failure of technique and skill.

Wayfarer thieves are equal parts con-men, burglars, and second-story artists. Upon arriving at a new location, they are usually the first to leave the caravan to explore it (i.e. scope it out and size it up). Every new city, town and village is filled with oppor-



tunity and ways to make money. This ranges from easy marks to dangerous heists. Preferred targets are the rich, nobility, clergy, braggarts and obvious scum bags.

Those dedicated to following the **Swapper's Code**, and most Wayfarer Thieves and Wizard-Thieves are, must incorporate the "swap" element in the crime. (See the described of the Swapper's Code on page 25.) The swap may not be fair, but is always done, and often clever. Likewise, true "artists" in the craft are not satisfied with merely obtaining something, they want to make a statement or leave a calling card, or do something that will make their robbery something to be remembered and talked about for years. This is especially true when targeting tyrants, kings, princes, heads of state and notorious and famous people.

Although the primary purpose of the Wayfarer Thief is to obtain by illegal means, property that belongs to someone else, it would be an error to simply dismiss them as "bad guys." The Wayfarer Thief's primary goal is to help his caravan clan. Most of the stolen goods go toward keeping the caravan operating, with goods and money being distributed to other Wayfarers and where they will do the most good! The Thief usually keeps only a few choice items and a tiny percentage of the loot for himself. These cunning and clever "procurement specialists" typically provide half of a caravan's income and includes stealing food, alcohol, medicine, livestock, clothes, blankets and other essentials.

All Wayfarers consider other Wayfarers to be their brothers and sisters and who stick together, even if they have never met before. This unshakable allegiance to their caravan, specifically, and their fellow Wayfarers, in general, makes them the rivals and

enemies of other thieves, especially Thieves' Guilds. A Wayfarer will never join, pay dues or give up a percentage of the take to any Thieves' Guild. Nor do they recognize the Guild's turf or their rules. And if shaken down and robbed by the members of a Thieves' Guild, you can safely bet your last coin that the Wayfarer will be back with "friends" (Enforcers, thieves, mages, etc.), to steal it back and more for their trouble. Wayfarers play by their own rules and sense of morality.

Wayfarer Thief O.C.C. Stats:

Attribute Requirements: P.P. 12 or higher. A high I.Q., M.A. and P.E. are helpful but not required.

Alignment: Unprincipled (10%), Anarchist (60%), Aberrant (20%), and others. A thief cannot be of a good alignment.

O.C.C. Wayfarer Bonuses: +1D4 to M.A., +1D4 to speed, +1 on initiative, +1 to dodge, +1 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +3 to pull punch, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

O.C.C. Skills:

Acrobatics or Tumbling (+5%; see the **High Seas** Sourcebook); pick one.

Climb/Scale Walls (+10%)

Concealment or Imitate Voices & Impersonation (+10%)

Dance or Play Musical Instrument of choice (+10%); pick one.

Escape Artist or Rope Works (+15%); pick one.

Forgery or Disguise (+5%); pick one.

Language: Native Tongue at 90%.

Language: Wayspeak at 98%

Language: One of choice (+5%).

Math: Basic (+20%)

Wayfarer Wizard-Thief

Palming (+20%)

Pick Locks or Locate Secret Compartments/Door (+15%)

Pick Pockets or Surveillance/Tailing (+10%); pick one.

Prowl (+10%)

Recognize Weapon Quality or Intelligence (+5%); pick one.

W.P.: Two of choice; any except Archery, Forked and Siege Weapons.

Hand to Hand: Basic, but can be changed to Hand to Hand: Expert or Assassin (if evil) at the cost of two O.C.C. Related Skill.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Choose two other skills at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels 4, 7, 11, and 15. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any (+5).

Espionage: Any, except Sniper.

Horsemanship: General only.

Medical: First Aid only (+5%).

Military: None.

Naval: None.

Physical: Any, excluding Wrestling and Gymnastics.

Rogue: Any (+10%).

Science: None.

Scholar/Technical: Any (+10% to Languages only).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any, except Siege Weapons.

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select one Secondary Skill from the previous list at levels 2, 6, 10 and 14. All new skills start at first level proficiency. These additional areas of knowledge do not get the advantages of the bonuses listed in the parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing (one for traveling, one flashy), bright colored bandanna, bright colored scarf, boots, a pair of soft leather gloves, belt, purse, backpack, one large sack, 1D4 medium sacks, 1D4 small pouches or sacks, a waterskin, lock picking tools, 50 feet (15.2 m) of rope, grappling hook, 1D4 wooden spikes, a small wooden mallet, pocket mirror, and a tinder box. **Note:** Wayfarers are snappy and stylish dressers. Thieves tend toward black and dark colors with splashes of golds and reds when on the job, otherwise they wear more flamboyant clothing and love silk shirts and scarves (the latter can be used to cover the lower part of the face), hooded capes and cloaks, leather goods such as armbands, gloves, boots, vests, and caps and hats.

Weapons: A small dagger easily palmed and concealed and may be suitable for throwing (1D4 S.D.C.), a pair of daggers (1D6 S.D.C. damage, at least one is silver-plated), and two additional weapons that fit the Thief's W.P. skills. All are basic S.D.C. weapons of fair to good quality. Experienced Wayfarer Thieves will acquire higher quality Kobold and Dwarven weapons and one or two magic items that help in their trade.

Armor: Starts with studded leather armor (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 28).

Money: 1D4x100+50 gold, 1D4 skins of wine and 1D4 bottles of Wayfarer moonshine, the good stuff. **Note:** Thieves like to enjoy the good life and spend money quickly and freely on life's pleasures and extravagances.

Among the Wayfarers, the most common practitioner of magic is the **Wizard-Thief**. Although some people believe the claims that Wizard-Thieves are mostly wizards who sometimes use their magic spells to steal, anyone familiar with them knows better. Wizard-Thieves are very much "thieves" who focus on magic that make them better thieves, and spies, because knowledge is power and there is usually someone willing to pay for information or to have something "acquired" for them.

Among practiced men of magic, the Wayfarer Wizard-Thief is regarded as crass, unscrupulous, second-rate dabblers in magic with only rudimentary magic knowledge. Knowledge used for thievery and therefore not a true nor respected or recognized member of the magic community. True Practitioners of Magic look down their noses upon Wizard-Thieves. Most refuse to even acknowledge their existence and do not consider them colleagues or peers. That's fine by Wayfarer Wizard-Thieves who prefer to operate from the shadows and do not seek glory or recognition. Just the rich rewards their craft can provide them and their caravan.

In Wayfarer society, unless there is a rare Wizard, Witch or Psi-Mystic in the group, it is the Wizard-Thief or Seer who deals with matters involving magic. Indeed, their knowledge in the mystic arts is limited. They possess few combat spells because their spell arsenal is mainly used for tricking and robbing others. Thus, Wayfarer Wizard-Thieves are often held in reserve during combat and used more for stealth missions, robberies, sabotage, and special situations that require their unique abilities.

Wayfarers respect mages and magic items, and seldom underestimate those who wield them. That means the Wizard-Thieves in their caravan are respected within their community, and are often asked their opinions in matters that affect the caravan and its people. Only Wizard-Thieves who put themselves before the welfare of the caravan are chastised by their brethren. Thankfully, being exiled is rare, as most Wizard-Thieves take their responsibilities and status among the Wayfarers very seriously. They seldom put themselves first, and are celebrated among their people. It is very rare, but any Wizard-Thief who betrays their caravan/clan is despised. Such renegades will be hunted down and are likely to be killed by their fellow Wayfarers without being taken before the Council of Elders for official clan justice. Remember, Wayfarers are fiercely loyal to their people and their so-called Wayfarer nation.

Wizard-Thief Abilities and Bonuses:

1. Initial Spells: At level one experience, the character knows the following spells: Armor of Ithan (10), Blinding Flash (1), Concealment (6), Detect Concealment (6), Fool's Gold (10), Globe of Daylight (2), Levitation (5), Sense Magic (4), Tongues (12) and Weightlessness (6). Plus two of choice from the list under #2, below.

2. Learning New Spells: Most Wayfarer Wizard-Thieves learn spells by apprenticing with a more experienced Wizard-Thief. This mentor shares his or her knowledge as their apprentice proves to be reliable and trustworthy to the caravan. A Wizard-Thief may also be granted a new spell as a boon or reward for outstanding service to, or heroism on behalf of, his caravan and his people.



Typical spells known and practiced by Wayfarer Wizard-Thieves are listed below. Select three new spells from this list for every new level of experience starting with level two. They can be selected by the player for his character or assigned by the Game Master playing the mentor or character issuing a spell reward for a very impressive deed.

Alphabetical Listing of Spells Available for a Wayfarer Wizard-Thief to Earn and Select from per Level of Advancement:

- Befuddle (6)
- Breathe Without Air (5)
- Carpet of Adhesion (10)
- Chameleon (6)
- Charismatic Aura (10)
- Charm (12)
- Climb (3)
- Cloud of Smoke (2)
- Cure Minor Disorders (10)
- Death Trance (2)
- Detect Poison (10)
- Energy Bolt (5)
- Escape (8)
- Extinguish Fire (4)
- Fire Ball (10)
- Fire Bolt (10)
- Fire Fist (15)
- Heal Wounds (10)
- Ignite Fire (6)
- Impervious to Fire (6)
- Impervious to Poison (5)

- Invisibility: Simple (6)
- Ley Line Transmission (30)
- Magic Net (7)
- Magic Pigeon (20)
- Mend Cloths (12)
- Multiple Image (7)
- Mystic Alarm (5)
- Negate Poison/Toxin (5)
- Reduce Self (20)
- Repel Animals (7)
- Seal (7)
- See Aura (6)
- See the Invisible (4)
- Sense Traps (7)
- Shadow Meld (10)
- Swim as a Fish (6)
- Telekinesis (8)
- Turn Dead (6)
- Ventriloquism (3)

Spells Reserved for Great Service and Acts of Heroism:

These are rarer, extra special magic invocations that are truly special and, generally, more powerful than those above. Game Masters, use your discretion in making even some of these available to player characters and NPCs alike. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are among the most desirable to Wizard-Thieves.

- * Call Lightning (15)
- * Familiar Link (55)
- * Fly as the Eagle (20)

Globe of Silence (20)
 * Heal Self (20)
 Invisibility: Superior (20)
 Locate (30)
 Love Charm (40)
 Metamorphosis: Human (40)
 See Wards (8)
 Sleep (10)
 * Trance (10)
 * Mystic Portal (60)
 Water to Wine (40)
 * Words of Truth (15)
 X-Ray Vision (25)

Note: Most (95%) Wizard-Thieves refuse to learn the Enchanted Cauldron – it's too disgusting for them and beyond their ability.

Theoretically, additional spells outside of those listed above can be learned and/or purchased by a Wayfarer Wizard-Thief from sources outside of the Wayfarer nation, but most never do so. Those who do find that their substandard training and orientation for thievery and stealth generally limits them to Level 1-5 spell invocations. Most stick to the spells that have become part of this Wayfarer occupation for generations, listed above.

3. See and Use Ley Lines: The ability to see ley lines and to use their ambient magical energies. Identical to the Wizard O.C.C. (see **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**, page 107).

4. Ley Line Drifting: The ability to open himself to the ley line energies and walk or float through the air along the length of a ley line. Identical to the Wizard O.C.C. (see **Palladium RPG**, page 107).

5. Ley Line Rejuvenation: The ability to absorb and utilize ley line energies to heal oneself. Identical to the Wizard O.C.C., EXCEPT restores half the amount Wizards get (i.e. 1D6 Hit Points and 1D6 S.D.C., instead of 2D6); see **Palladium RPG**, page 107.

6. P.P.E.: Like all practitioners of magic, the Wizard-Thief is a living battery of mystic energy that he can draw upon to create magic. The character's permanent P.P.E. base is 1D4x10+10 plus their P.E. attribute number. Add 1D6+3 P.P.E. per level of experience.

7. Magic Bonuses: +1 to save vs magic, +1 to spell strength (the number others must save against when the character casts a spell) at levels 3, 7, 10, and 13, +1 to save vs possession, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor. **Note:** No other Wizard O.C.C. Skills and Bonuses apply.

Wayfarer Wizard-Thief O.C.C. Stats:

Attribute Minimum Requirements: I.Q. 10 (to learn magic) and P.P. 11 (to be a Wayfarer Thief and spell caster) or better. Only 18% of Wayfarer Wizard-Thieves are literate in any language.

Alignment: Unprincipled (30%), Anarchist (50%), Aberrant (10%) and other. As part thief, they cannot be of a good alignment.

O.C.C. Skills:

Dance or Sing (+15%); pick one.
 Language: Native Tongue at 98%.
 Language: Wayspeak at +80%

Language: Two of choice (+10%) or One Literacy (+15%).
 Lore: Demons & Monsters (+15%)
 Lore: Faerie Folk (+10%)
 Math: Basic (+20%)
 Palming (+10%)
 Pick Pockets or Concealment (+10%)
 Rogue Skill: One of Choice (+5%)
 W.P.: One of choice (any).

Hand to Hand: Basic; can be changed to Hand to Hand: Expert at the cost of three O.C.C. Related Skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Choose two other skills at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Espionage: Escape Artist, Forgery and Intelligence only (+10%).

Horsemanship: General only.

Medical: First Aid only (+5%).

Military: None.

Naval: None.

Physical: Acrobatics, Climb, Running and Swimming only.

Rogue: Any (+5%).

Science: Any.

Scholar/Technical: Any (+5%; languages and literacy +10%).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any, except Archery, Forked and Siege Weapons.

Wilderness: None.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select two Secondary Skills from the previous list at level one, and one additional skill at levels 2, 5 and 8. All new skills start at first level proficiency. These additional areas of knowledge do not get the advantages of the bonuses listed in the parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing (one for traveling, one flashy), a pair of quality boots, a cloak or cape with or without a hood, bright colored bandanna, bright colored scarf, a pair of leather gloves, belt, purse, backpack, one large sack, 1D4 small pouches or sacks, a waterskin, 50 feet (15.2 m) of rope, grappling hook, 1D6 wooden spikes, a small wooden mallet, a wood or silver cross, a pocket mirror, and a tinder box. **Note:** Wayfarers are snappy and stylish dressers and their choice of garments will reflect their bright personalities.

Weapons: A pair of daggers (1D6 each, silver-plated) and one additional weapon for each W.P. skill. All are basic S.D.C. weapons of fair to good quality.

Armor: Starts with soft leather (A.R. 10, S.D.C. 20).

Money: The character starts with 1D6x100+120 gold. Experienced Wayfarer Wizard-Thieves acquire 1D4 magic weapons, 1D6 magic potions, and 1D4 lesser magic items. They love getting their hands on magic potions, fumes, foods, brews, magic items and magic weapons whenever they can. Of course, they love money and good times more, so they usually sell or trade away magic items and magic weapon that are worth a lot of money. In fact, the Wizard-Thief, Seer and Caravan Master are likely to have the best magic items of the community, while top Enforcers may have one or two magic weapons or a potion or two.



DUDLEY 2018

House of the Red Sands

Official Source Material for the Splicers® RPG

By Kris Tipping

Additional writing and ideas by Charles Walton II and Kevin Siembieda

“The Desert is your ally and your enemy. Be aware of which side you are on when you enter.” – Red Sands proverb.

The scorching, arid deserts of the world are desolate landscapes, limited in the life forms that can survive it. As such, neither the Machine nor the Resistance give these environments much consideration as they provide very little in reward. The Machine does not patrol these desolate lands often as there are few vital targets or Splicer numbers wandering around to warrant the deployment of numerous valuable robots. Only a few of the Machine’s drones are buried in the sands and Sky Fighters may soar across the sky periodically to scout out any above-the-surface level activities. One House of Splicers is rumored to have made the planet’s largest, desolate sea of sand, the dreaded **Icarus Desert**, their home base and specialize in desert-oriented biotechnology. A group so sick and tired of humans fighting among themselves that they have chosen to lose themselves in the wind-swept sands and dunes until they believe the time is right to join the other Great Houses, united, against the Machine. Until then, they isolate themselves. Ghosts in the sand that are more rumor and legend than reality (but they are very much real). A proud and noble House with a harsh outlook towards life, survival and the war against the Machine.

The House of the Red Sands exists largely unto itself as it slowly builds its own war machine and grows its strength and population numbers, until the day the Final War is brought to the Machine.

It is impossible to escape the Machine and the threat of her ever-present legion of robots and machines of destruction. To think otherwise is to delude yourself. The House of Red Sands entered the Icarus Desert in order to escape the escalating conflicts between other Splicer Houses, growing numbers of strange monsters and the savage, predatory bandits known as **Waste Crawlers** (miscreants protected and encouraged to harm their fellow humans by Kali and Lilith, and whose primary targets are Splicers and the people of the Great Houses. **Note:** See **The Rifter® #32** for details about these foul human tribes.)

The House of Red Sands has no interest in enslaving or exterminating fellow Splicers, nor do they want to be conquered, enslaved or absorbed, themselves, by warring Houses or Waste Crawler Tribes. So they have chosen to remove themselves from the equation – for now – by exiling themselves into the inhospitable desert. While they shun the politics and infighting of the other Great Houses, they are themselves intolerant of cruelty and treachery at the hands of outsiders and strike them down without mercy whenever they are threatened by outside forces. This may seem contrary from people who claim to respect human life and long to see the Resistance and all of humanity unite, and together battle the Machine, and it is. But such are the mercurial ways of the House of the Red Sand. Compassion-

ate and idealist on one hand, intolerant and quick to violence on the other.

The House believes that the Purge was humanity’s punishment for their past indiscretions, and the psychotic Machine an ever-present threat to make humanity suffer in torment. But while humans still draw breath, there remains hope. Hope and the opportunity for salvation. Humanity has a chance to find its way and become something better, even great, again. If the Machine is the embodiment of humanity’s mistake, their failings as a species, the House of the Red Sands intends to find the path to redemption and become the best that humanity has to offer. So that was another reason for entering the desert: They needed to minimize the level of distraction from their quest to find new ways to annihilate the Machine and her robot legions.

Words to follow

The House of the Red Sands is fond of proverbs. They say that the ancestors of humanity (pre-N.E.X.U.S.) had wise communities that utilized many proverbs, and the House of Red Sands is humbled to have such profound words to guide them to their destiny. They say such rarely preserved yet highly underrated treasures of wisdom remind them of what’s important and that humans have the capacity to become a noble, wise and humble species. For them, these words from the ancients bring the House of Red Sands hope and wisdom that promises the brighter and better future they strive to attain. Current leaders and teachers have also added plenty of their own, new proverbs and sayings to the mix. Below are some notable examples of both.

“The ox is slow, but the earth is patient,” a pre-N.E.X.U.S. proverb the House of Red Sands interprets to mean that their house is as patient as the earth, and so they wait for the Day of Unity among the Resistance. Until then, they quietly grow stronger and wiser, and ready for a new age of redemption.

“Don’t think there are no crocodiles just because the water is calm.” Another pre-N.E.X.U.S. proverb that serves as a warning. But some see the House of Red Sands as the crocodile that lurks quietly and patiently beneath the sand, and is the ultimate threat to N.E.X.U.S.

“The desert is unforgiving and indifferent.” Nature is already a cruel mistress, but the people of this House embrace the harsh reality of nature to give themselves the strength, courage and wisdom to correct the mistakes of the past.

“The eyes of the House of Red Sands are everywhere.” Visitors to their domain find no border patrols or checkpoints. Travelers can enter the desert territory unimpeded. But like the scorching sun through the day, and frigid moon looking down at night, they see all. And visitors with malicious or cruel intention shall be struck down after witnessing the red sand.

“When the time comes and humanity unites to fight the Machine, we shall be the sandstorm that blankets the world, eroding even the mountains to get to our enemy.” A quote from the first leader of House of the Red Sands.

They consider it the duty of the human race to correct the mistakes of the past, and they do all they can to defeat N.E.X.U.S.

Other Red Sands proverbs

“The desert is a silent teacher. If you listen to the silence, you will learn many secrets.”

“The Desert is always three steps ahead, you can never catch it. The trick is to survive and follow it, not try to catch it.”

“Allow your enemy to think they are in the grip of victory. That is when they are most vulnerable. That is when you strike at their heart and bathe the desert with their blood.”

“If an enemy pursues you into the desert, keep their attention on you and they will dig their own grave.

“Only together can we triumph against the Machine.”

“Right action. Right time.”

Geography and Climate

The House of the Red Sands is located in one of the largest, hottest deserts in the world, known as the **Icarus Desert** and also called the **Nyaya Jamina**, meaning “Land of Judgement.” Its area of 4,440,175 square miles (11,500,000 square km) is frightening to enter and is still revealing secrets that lurk below the surface. This arid habitat borders the south-eastern side of the Barren Land Wilderness (located on the far outskirts of the Arkadian Mountain range) and is south of one of Gaia’s newest Nature Preserves that also borders the **Great House of Pandora** (see **The Rifter® #67**, page 16). Part of this vast desert was once submerged and belonged to the planet’s greatest ocean, long before humanity’s uncontrolled expansions and industrialization that occurred before the devastating war with the machine. Buried ruins and relics of facilities that were once deep-sea exploration compounds continue to be uncovered as Sandstorms reveal these haunting carcasses.

The Icarus Desert is comprised of massive seas of loose sand, dune valleys, oil reservoirs and cracked deserts along its peripheral edges, as it gets closer to the Wilderness and Mountain range. The dune valleys are one of the signature features of this desert as they stretch to 125 miles (200 km) in length. There are five known types of sand dunes, and the Icarus has four of them:

Crescentic or Barchan Dunes are generated when the wind blows and dominates in one direction for long periods of time, creating crescent-shaped dunes that face only one way. As the sand increases, barchan dunes begin to connect with others forming barchanoid ridges. If the ridges become fairly straight, they are called transverse dunes.

Linear or Straight Dunes are slightly sinuous sand ridges typically much longer than they are wide. They can be very long and may occur as isolated ridges, but they generally form sets of parallel ridges separated by miles of sand, gravel, or rocky interdune corridors. Some linear dunes fuse and become Y-shaped compound dunes. Many form in bi-directional wind regimes.

Reversing Dunes are created by quick wind reversals that form miniature sand walls atop of the dunes crest up to 10 feet (3 m) high.

Star Dunes are formed when the area’s wind assortment is complex, thus creating dunes that have more than three arms or faces, and they form shapely mounds that face upwards. These only form in places where wind blows from varied directions over the course of a year.

The Icarus Desert is mainly unnamed Sand Seas (large areas covered with sand dunes), with some dunes that are over 590 feet (180 m) high. Wind and extremely rare rainfall shape the desert features: sand dunes, dune fields, sand seas, stone plateaus, gravel plains, dry valleys, dry lakes, and the salt flats (along its borders). Several dissected underground volcanic mountains rise along the eastern edge near the Arkadian Mountain ridge and have sparse vegetation, grassland and desert shrubs where moisture collects. In the central, hyper-arid region, most areas receive no rain for years at a time. The permanent dissolution of clouds allows unhindered light and thermal radiation to cover the desert surface. The stability of the atmosphere above the desert prevents any convective overturning, thus making rainfall virtually non-existent.

As a consequence, the weather is typically sunny, dry and stable with a minimal risk of rainfall. Subsiding, diverging, dry air masses associated with subtropical high-pressure systems are extremely unfavorable for the development of convective showers. The subtropical ridges are the predominant factor that explains the hot desert climate for this grueling region of the planet. The lowering of air is the strongest and the most effective over the eastern part of the Icarus Desert, which is the sunniest, driest and nearly rain-inhibited place on the planet.

There aren’t any Computer Cores known or discovered to exist here, so the House of Red Sands does not reside in an Area of Influence (unlike most Houses that purposely surround designated Computer Cores to fight against the massive N.E.X.U.S. control centers). There are very few creatures that can survive or purposely would venture into such inhospitable conditions. The dust and sandstorms make it undesirable for most facilities or any faction to thrive here for long extended periods of time.

The Icarus Desert simply does not yield a lot of benefits for N.E.X.U.S. to deploy significant numbers of machines here, for the time being at least. The recent rise in Splicer activities, growing numbers of Hydrant Ant populations (Gaia’s eyeing this species) and discovery of oil reservoirs may soon change that. Increased air patrols of Sky Fighter squadrons are revealing that the machine is still watching.

Noteworthy Weather Conditions

Dust Storms occur in the stony and rocky deserts and throughout the region wherever parched earth is found. They are typically the result of strong winds (20 mph/32 km or higher). While they occur more frequently than sandstorms (once every 1D4 days), they are much less harmful; more of a nuisance than deadly.

Penalties: Travelers caught in a dust storm will have their visibility reduced to about a quarter of a mile (1,200 feet/366 m), their movement/speed is reduced by 30%, the Land Navigation skill is reduced by half, Tracking is impossible, sense of direction may be affected, sound is obscured by the wind and blowing dust (shouting range is about 100 feet/30.5 m), and the eyes, nose and mouth must be shielded/covered, otherwise the blowing dust and grit will get in them and blind the eyes (takes one minute to rinse or rub them clear) and causes those who gulp a handful of dust when trying to speak with an uncovered mouth, and to cough and

gag (loses one melee action). The mouth can be covered with a cloth or the hands, the eyes protected with goggles or kept closed.

Sandstorms. These are the classic desert maelstroms with high, sustained winds that can move an incredible amount of sand, dust, pebbles and debris in a short period of time. Sandstorms happen everywhere in the Icarus Desert; any given area here can expect a serious sandstorm (lasting 3D10x10 minutes, sometimes twice or three times as long) at least once every 10 days. The biggest Sandstorm in the Icarus Desert happens once a year and is called the **Great Haboon** and it can last for 6D10x10+20 minutes and has a 15% chance of also containing tiny bits of metal, including oddball precious metals, jewelry, toys and old trinket technology. It is unknown if these various items are naturally unearthed scraps from the days of old, or are newly introduced pieces of collected history purposely dumped into the desert by one of the twisted N.E.X.U.S. personalities. The key to surviving is simple, humble yourself and stay out of the way of the Great Haboon.

Under most circumstances, sandstorms blind whomever walks through them, obscure paths, trails and landmarks and even harm exposed flesh with pelting sand.

Penalties: Travelers caught in a Sandstorm will have their visibility cut down to a miniscule 1D4 yards/meters, their movement is reduced by 70%, the land navigation and Tracking Skills are rendered absolutely useless, sense of direction is lost, sound is obscured by the wind and clatter of the sand (shouting range is about 10 feet/3 m), and the eyes, nose and mouth must be covered, otherwise the blowing sand and grit will get in them and blind the eyes (takes 1D4 minutes to rinse or rub them clear with water and recover one's vision) and choke those breathing the stuff (causes coughing and gagging with a 2% chance of asphyxiation).

Furthermore, the pelting sand and debris stings, especially against unprotected flesh, inflicting one point of S.D.C. damage per 10 minutes until they reach shelter – shelter can be a tent, boulder, large crater, dead carcass of a creature or War Mount, or digging deep enough below the sand to wait the storm out. One can cover up using extra clothing, cloaks and/or blankets, being sure to protect one's head and face and hiding behind a large obstacle or curling up in a fetal position (moving from time to time to avoid getting buried if the sand begins to blow and drift too deep or to avoid some metal fragment that is being triggered by the nanobot plague reaction).

In the deepest sandy desert regions of the Icarus, sandstorms are especially lethal. Here the average storm lasts for 5D6x10 minutes. Anyone caught in one of these has their visibility reduced to zero (can barely see their hands in front of their face), their movement is slowed by 95%, and they take 1D4 damage from the flying sand particles and scathing winds per ten minutes until shelter is found or made. However, a soft shelter like a tent or flimsy animal carcass or blankets, will suffer double damage throughout the storm, which means that most light shelters will be ripped apart and destroyed in long storms, let alone the Great Haboon. Under such conditions, the only real refuge is among a rocky enclosure/outcropping, cave, wood or stone structure or underground.

Penalties: Same as above.

As if that weren't enough, sandstorms in the sandy parts of the Icarus also move tremendous volumes of sand. Any given spot affected by a sandstorm will gain or lose (50%/50% chance) 1D6

feet (0.3 to 1.8 meters) of sand every 10 minutes. This means that in the course of a storm, an area can be entirely buried or completely uncovered. Characters caught in such storms must take this into account, or risk being buried alive by the storm's end! This also means that paths, trails, and prominent landmarks may be obliterated or covered by drifting sand, at least until the next storm. One more reason traveling through the Icarus Desert is so difficult is because it is hard to locate a place or trace one's path when the landscapes keeps changing every few weeks.

Quicksand. Despite there being a lack of water in the Icarus Desert, loose light sand can easily react like liquid and become a form of deadly quicksand. It blends very well into the rest of the desert but tends to prematurely cave-in somewhat (2-5%) when enough vibration gets near it. Those with a trained eye will spot these pockets of horror and carefully avoid them. Anything weighing more than three pounds (1.4 kg) will be sucked into the pool of loose sand. A large creature such as a human will be completely engulfed in a matter of 2D4+2 minutes. If the victim struggles he will disappear in 1D4+1 minutes!

Animals and humans suffocate and die within three minutes after their head is submerged. To survive, the victim must slowly lift their legs upwards towards the surface and attempt to leap for harder sand to crawl onto (typically the edges of the quicksand are the more compact spots). There is only a 01-35% chance that harder sand is within reach. The victim may be rescued by another character throwing a rope or extending a limb or bone or weapon and pulling him out, or they can use any form of Bio-Enhancement like tentacles, a tail, organic thrusters, etc., to escape. However, the would-be rescuer must be careful to find the edge of the quicksand pool and avoid falling in or being accidentally pulled in himself. Once the person, animal or object is pulled under the surface it leaves no trace. Splicers adorned in Living Body Armor, Host Armor or Proto Host Armor and War Mounts that are environmentally sealed and can breathe underground, can dig themselves out by normal digging. Technojackers with activated nanobot armors can also dig themselves out at 5 mph (8 km).

A desert Quicksand patch is roughly circular in shape and can vary in size from a tiny five foot (1.5 m) diameter to a 40 foot (12.2 m) diameter, but most range between five and 20 feet (1.5 to 6 m). Desert Quicksand is mostly located near loose, dry sand and where taller dunes are found.

Collapser. When large volumes of sand collapse because the harder, compact floor beneath the loose sand has been severely compromised or agitated, often from heavy battles that may have occurred on the surface that sent significant vibrations below, or heavy tunneling and digging being done below (often caused by Hydrant swarms or the Desert Rose) that has vibrated and compromised the sand above it, and the terrain inevitably collapses to fill in the gaps. Besides the shock and tumbling, no significant damage is done as the collapse is usually no further than 2D6 feet (0.6 to 3.7 m), but the sand that quickly begins to pour in is another story and characters must quickly scurry up the hole while 2-3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 m) of sand pours in on them per melee action, are forced to dig themselves out or risk being buried alive.

Travel

Traveling on foot: The deep, soft sand of the Icarus Desert makes it difficult for travelers to get any sort of traction; this is especially true of hooped animals, Host Armors, War Mounts and

some machines. The maximum walking speed for humanoids is 3-5 miles (4.8 to 8 km) an hour at a brisk pace, with a five minute rest period necessary at every hour. Travelers can cover two miles (3.2 km) an hour at a leisurely pace, and only have to stop for 5-10 minute rest breaks every four hours. Maximum running speed is reduced by 30% for most humanoids, 50% for humanoids under four feet (1.2 m) like the Geneticist's Homunculi, and 10% for large humanoids over 12 feet (3.7 m) tall like the Grendel War Mount.

Traveling on horseback: Approximately 24 miles (38.4 km) an hour at full gallop but there's a 01-15% chance of the horse stumbling or falling without injuring itself (loses initiative, 1D4 melee actions getting up, and must start running again, plus the animal is likely to throw its rider when falling). Mega Horses have only 01-08% chance of falling and will take no damage from such a fall. 18 miles (28.8 km) an hour at a brisk but reasonable pace; 10 miles (16 km) an hour at a leisurely pace. Maximum Speed is reduced by 20% for most horses, and hoofed riding animals.

Traveling on a camel or other desert animals: 36 miles (57.6 km) an hour at full run, but this pace is pushing the animal, and it will not be able to sustain it after an hour, and will collapse from overexertion. A brisk but reasonable pace is 24 miles (38.4 km) an hour. A leisurely pace is 16 miles (25.6 km) an hour. The Sapphire Mega Horse of the Red Sands is Bio-Engineered with camel-like feet and a breather that make it well suited for the climate and makes it fit into his classification.

Government & Relationships

The House of Red Sands desires to see humanity united, and the world made free of the Machine, and if possible, the nano-plague. However, the rivalry, backstabbing and even warring between the Houses has made the House of Red Sands somewhat bitter, and unsympathetic to the squabbling and intra-guild struggles of the Resistance. The internal competition and political conflicts of the Resistance has compelled them to isolate themselves from their brethren. However, though they have removed themselves from as much intra-guild conflict as possible, and are violently intolerant to cruelty even by human hands, the House knows war and strife is unavoidable. Indeed, they have never forsaken their fellow humans and actively engage in battle against all the forces of the Machine. To that end, like most Splicer societies, the House of Red Sands operates as a militaristic community that works at developing new Host Armor and organic weapons to undermine and fight the ultimate enemy, the Machine. However, there is a deep philosophy at the heart of the House. A philosophy associated with connecting back to the forces of nature and testing their will and resolve to survive.

The war efforts of the House of Red Sands are focused mainly against the Machine, but they engage in battle against those humans whom they deem counterproductive to their dream of a world free of the Machine and a unified humanity. This includes miscreants such as Waste Crawlers, and conquering or enslaving Houses.

The leaders and elite among the House of Red Sands are often assigned a special title that is supposed to represent wisdom and enlightenment, rather than being a title devoted to warfare or position of political or military power. Instead of being called

Senators and Warlords like other Great Houses, they utilize the titles "Ustad" for males and "Ustada" for females. Ustad(a) is an archaic word that was once given to individuals as an honorary title to highly regarded humanitarians, teachers, philosophers and artists. The title precedes the person's name and continues to be one of the highest honors that can be bestowed upon a member of the House of Red Sands.

The present Head of the House of Red Sand is an **Ustada** who is a Dreadguard that has her own personal Swarmlord Bodyguards to enforce her will. A wise female leader named **Jigisha Kanta**, whose level is left to the discretion of the Game Master.

It is also left to the Game Master's decision to make the House of Red Sands extreme isolationists who stand alone in their war against N.E.X.U.S, or whether it is quietly allied with other Houses, factions and bands of heroes. If you choose to have them ally with others outside their own house, we suggest that they act like silent business partners and meet in secret, with Red Sands having a specific representative for each allied group. It is also suggested that if Red Sands ally themselves to another House, they have a contingency of their troops that use Splicer creations that are the stock standard, instead of revealing their unique desert creations and enhancements hidden deep in the desert.

Game Master Notes: if you choose for the House to be isolationists, then they intentionally avoid contact with human outsiders, and only attack the most malevolent and wicked humans, including slavers, Waste Crawlers, scouting parties belonging to rival and avenging Houses, as well as the forces of the Machine. You could have a multitude of story plots surrounding the myth of the mysterious "Red Sandmen" or "Desert Splicers." Campfire stories speak of an enigmatic Splicer faction (believed to be much smaller than the House really is), or vigilantes who strike ferociously against the Machine and evildoers. A mysterious group of heroes or madmen said to rescue the innocent from slavery and cruelty, only to vanish without a trace. Often leaving those they just saved to fend for themselves in the hostile wilderness rather than take them in.

You can build a considerable mythology around the existence of this mysterious House/Faction that is said to reside somewhere in the depths of the desert. Movement seen along the shimmering horizon, or unidentified aerial units circling in the sky and vanishing beyond the dunes, as well as stories of strange sounds and reports of Host Armor (or was it something else?) the likes of which are not known to other Houses. Ghost stories, anecdotal reports and legends are always good stuff for story plots and adventure.

How the House got its Name

"When you see the sand turn red ... run! Flee before Rage and Wrath stains the sand red with your own blood. The crimson cloud or red sand always means Death is coming for you." – From the ramblings of survivor, Strider Outrider, Sgt. Rispian Nua (Barren Marsh's 11th Cavalry Division).

This warning is connected to legends about an unknown band or house of Splicers that are said to exist in one or more deserts. Among the House of Red Sands, when a member of

the house spills their own blood onto the sand in an obvious ritualized gesture of anger, disgust or defiance, it serves as a signal to annihilate a threat within their domain. A silent signal to attack even if the threat is human. When a Red Sands Splicer or individual gives this signal, the Gardeners releases a red pollen/dust that is carried by the wind and covers an area (speed, distance, radius and duration as needed) in red. A sign for the warriors of the House of Red Sands to strike down, without mercy, black-hearted intruders, wicked slavers, invading Waste Crawlers and any other malicious rogues who do not respect or value human life and represent a threat to the House or all humans. In the alternative, a Host Armor from the House of Red Sands may cry tears of blood to signal the House's defenders to annihilate those whom are the cause of the tears. Blood tears also function as a silent signal to warn fellow members of their house when they know an outsider lies, is duplicitous, and must be struck down before he/they can cause harm to the House or the innocent.

The House hates the Machine above all others, though Waste Crawlers are a close second, and they strike at N.E.X.U.S. and her robot legions at every opportunity. The House regularly hunts down her minions and engages in ambushes and sabotage against the Machine. However, they also abhor the savagery and cruelty exhibited by many humans, and when they witness such displays of inhumanity to fellow man, they strike down the villains responsible with the same ferocity as they do the creations of the Machine. This violent intolerance to acts of cruelty and wickedness may seem contrary to the philosophical nature and goals of the House, but such are their ways.

“To the victor goes the Spoils of War.” Like many Splicer Houses, the House of Red Sands collects and salvages everything it can from the battlefield. The spoils of war from fallen allies and foes alike are returned to the **Desert Rose** for processing and re-purposing.

“Value water, the same as you value your own life.” Water is precious in the desert and valuable beyond measure. It can mean the difference between life and death. One proverb states: “We are dependent on water. Water is not dependent on us. Never give it away without consideration and never waste it lest you tempt the Fates to turn against you.” Most members of the House believe that to waste water is to call down the ire of Fate and turn Fate against you, leading to bad luck, misfortune, suffering and even death as punishment for such folly.

Many steps have been taken in the very designs of their Host armors, War Mounts and weapons to conserve water. As the conservation of water is imperative, there are a number of weapons that are not used by the House of Red Sands:

- No weapons that require a liquid medium are used.
- No spore dischargers.
- No viral immobilizers.
- No acid nodules.
- No Hydro-cutters.
- No Gore.

As a result, the House focuses mainly on casting and energy-based weapons as well as hand to hand combat that utilizes claws, quills, blades, spikes, teeth, tentacles, and so on.

The House has also achieved two fundamental Enhancements for surviving in the desert: 1) The reduction of the sheer volume of water required, and 2) the ability to retain water. See end of this article for **Dry Muscle & Altered Physiology**.

Population Breakdown of the House of Red Sands

Any allies made by this desert House are likely to have no idea of its true population numbers and are never brought into the House's primary colony known as **The COLONY**, but kept at a distance on the surface. Nor does anyone know how this mysterious House actually exists deep in the desert. For the most part, few Splicers visit the desert, let alone stay there and ever see any kind of city or Great House. The closest an ally or adventurer may get – with an invitation and someone from the House of Red Sands vouching for them – is a rendezvous location in the desert or along its outskirts bordering the wilderness. If lucky, the rendezvous point will be a small oasis, water spring or otherwise shaded area. The people of the House of Red Sand cherish their privacy and do not trust the other Houses nor outsiders. Even heroes who appear to be noble and kind are not brought into the sanctuary of the actual hidden haven of Red Sands, called a Colony. Instead, these Splicers are as patient as the Earth. They prefer to remain “ghosts” – the stuff of legend – while they grow in numbers and strength. When the day comes when the rest of humanity is ready to unite against their common enemy, N.E.X.U.S, the Red Sands army will rise up to be the storm that the Machine has never imagined. Until then, they rather enjoy being mysterious ghosts. Keeping their true numbers, strengths and capabilities unknown and underestimated is all part of their plan.

Total Population: 5,841

Population Breakdown Red Sands:

- 1,206 Archangels (all Flocks are Vultures)
- 532 Biotics – Xeric Guard Templates – Along with the Archangels are used as Roughnecks, though the haven is protected by Roughneck infantry.
- 448 Dreadguards (the current Leader is Ustada Dreadguard) ***
- 30 Falconers **
- 48 Gardeners
- 32 Geneticists (with plans for more)
- 251 Outriders:
 - 93 Nova Hawks
 - 72 Molok
 - 57 Desert Judges (Viper War Mounts)
 - 29 Kamikaze War Mounts
- 45 Pack Masters **
- 86 Roughnecks (Haven Infantry protection)
- 11 Saints
- 81 Scarecrows (32, 27 and 23 for the Librarians)
- 27 Skinjobs
- 0 Techojackers *
- 35 Swarm Lords
- Other O.C.C.s:
 - Civilians (2,997 families, council, scientists, teachers and members in training.)
 - 3 Librarians
 - 9 Engineers

* Officially, the House does not have any Technojackers among their numbers as the desert is not a very hospitable environment for Technojacker technology. However, the House harbors no ill will towards them, and realizes that they will play a vital role in the impending final war against the Machine. If you

have chosen to have the House ally itself with other factions, they could associate with a number of Technojackers.

** The main role of the Falconers and Pack Masters involves functioning as hunters, long-range reconnaissance, border scouts, search and rescue operations, and tagging and collecting resources. The base template for the House's Gorehounds has the Sand Feet Enhancement (see description below), as part of their design. This enables the Gorehounds to run at near maximum speed across sandy deserts and over sand dunes.

50% of the Falconers of Red Sands add the Butcher's Organ Enhancement into their birds, turning them into vultures. The Falconers and Nova Hawks work together a lot as the aerial reconnaissance, air support, hunters and vanguard of the House.

*** The Desert Rose and the primary haven known as The Colony, always keep one company of Dreadguards on hand in which there are two platoons of Dune Vipers, and one platoon of Thorny Devils, plus two units of Gardeners and Roughnecks and one unit of Swarm Lords. The rest may be deployed on other missions, above or below the surface.

Note: The Red Sands military philosophy works around groups of three, and the mindset of swarm insects. Thus, most operations are small squads rather than full-scale armies. This approach to their military means that there are a lot of Archangels, relatively few Dreadguards compared to other Houses, and small numbers of War Mounts. The weakest and the lowest ranks (often the Xeric Guard), are pushed to the front lines when under attack.

The Red Sands militia groups are organized in sets of three: Three in a unit/ fire-team, 9 in a squad, 27 in a platoon, 81 in a company, 243 in a battalion, 729 in a brigade, 2,187 in an army division.

Dreadguard Template

Host Armors

The House designed two template Host Armors for their Dreadguards. As a symbol and homage to their environment, two desert animals have been chosen. Every Dreadguard receives one of these armors, either a **Thorny Devil** or **Dune Viper** Host Armor when indoctrinated into the Red Sands militia as a Level One Dreadguard. They cannot personalize the armor until they reach level two, with the +1D4x10 Bio-E they receive every level, starting at level two.

Dune Viper Host Armor

The snake is a versatile animal common to desert environments. The House of Red Sands has chosen the viper to be its symbol because of the animal's adaptability, durability and deadly, venomous bite. Indeed it is an apt symbol, for despite the House's high ideals, they, like the viper, do not tolerate the foolish and are quick to strike out with deadly force. Not just against the hated machine, but against the Splicers of other Great Houses and fellow humans who prey upon or victimize their own kind. An extreme and aggressive way to live, but it's the way of the Red Sands people. Like the viper, the House of the Red Sands, though small, is formidable and dangerous, and aren't afraid to face a much larger foe.

The Dune Viper Host Armor is a favorite, in part because of the symbolism, but it is also formidable in combat. The exact style of both the Dune Viper and the Thorny Devil Host Armors can vary dramatically, especially when it comes to spikes, spines, weapons and features. However, Viper Host Armor always has some type of snake-like head, a long, serpentine lower body and an extra pair of scythe-like arms added above the standard pair. This gives the Viper Host Armor a little bit of a praying mantis appearance, if a praying mantis had the body and tail of a snake rather than legs. Though versatile and suitable for almost any environment (less ideal in mountainous and arctic terrains), the Dune Viper (and Thorny Devil) are designed for the desert environment and excel at operations in sandy and stony deserts and other dry, hot conditions.

The ability to slither gives the Dune Viper armor a low profile (about 3 feet/0.9 m tall) on the sand, and even without legs, it has a good speed. Slithering also makes the armor silent (see Prowl). When angry or engaging in combat, the Viper is able to rise up on its serpentine lower body, up to 11 feet (3.3 m) tall, to engage robots and alien predators. The serpentine body also enables the armored Splicer to bob and weave, and use the praying mantis-like blade-arms with excellent effectiveness.

The Dune Viper armor, Thorny Devil and other styles of Host Armors may be deployed for any type of mission, including accompanying deep reconnaissance squads, combat missions, search and rescue operations, and surgical strike teams. They also serve as defenders of the Desert Rose compound and certain to be encountered inside or around the facility.

Class: Elite Host Armor for Dreadguards.

Level: First.

Bio-E Remaining: None.

M.D.C. by Location:

Arms (4) – 90 each

Scythes (2 on top pair of arms) – 40 each

Hands (2 on bottom pair of arms) – 70 each

Head – 170 (90 +30 for absent pilot head & +50 for Neck Hood.)

Serpentine Lower Body – 260

Casting Thrower – 60

Main Body – 405 (300 +60 for increased chest and +45 from Serpentine Lower Body Enhancement.)

Important Note: Because the additional pair of Scythes arms have been incorporated into the initial template design and are above the pair of arms for the pilot, this places the head of the pilot in the chest cavity of the Host Armor and not its head. This increases the M.D.C. of the Head and Main Body of the Host Armor, and has already been factored into the above stats.

Speed:

Running/Crawling/Slithering: 45 mph (72 km) due to the Lower Body (snake).

Leaping: Not possible due to the Serpentine (snake) Lower Body.

Digging: 20 mph (32 km) through dirt and sand, and 5 mph (8 mph) through clay or solid rock and concrete.

Swimming: 30 mph (48 km/26 knots). Swimming tires the pilot, but at 10% the usual rate.

Underwater Depth: 700 feet (213.4 m) down.

Flying: Not possible, unless Enhancement is selected later.

Statistical Data:

Height: 8-13 feet (2.4 to 4 m) tall when coiled up to the top of the head. The additional pair of praying mantis-like limbs protrude upwards, increasing the height of the Host Armor to 3 feet (0.9 m) more than the pilot's height.

Width and Length: Standard for a Splicer.

Weight: Adds an additional 600 pounds (270 kg) to the weight of the pilot.

Cargo: None, other than what the character can carry.

Physical Strength: 33 (+6 from Serpentine Lower Body, which has been included).

Production Cycle, Lifespan, Horror Factor: Standard.

Bio-Regeneration: Normal.

Senses & Features: Seismic Sense, Dry Muscle, Altered Physiology (for water retention), Serpentine Lower Body, Additional Pair of Arms, Fire Breath, Quick Clotting Blood, Resistance to Heat, Armored Eyes, Enhanced Neurological Connection, Neck Hood*. Scythe Hands**.

Plus base instinct skills of Dowsing 60%, Excavation/Mining 50%, Land Navigation 60% and Masonry 60%. Also, from the Serpentine lower body, and +10% to balance, Prowl and Swimming skills.

* The Neck Hood is an alternate to the Armored Head Crest enhancement. It provides the same M.D.C. as the Armored Head Crest, but the Neck Hood does not require Horned Defense, and the Neck Hood does not provide any of the bonuses to a head butt attack or ram attack. The inclusion of the Hood increases the surface area of the forehead, allowing six instead of four Glow Cells to be placed in that region.

Cost is a little bit more at 15 Bio-E.

** The Scythe Hands are Praying Mantis Style and are incorporated into the top pair of arms. The pilot's arms are in the lower pair of arms.

Feeding/Metabolism: Despite its predatory appearance, this Host Armor is a Lithovore.

Sleep Requirements: The Host Armor requires 3D4 hours of sleep/rest/inactivity per day, during the day or night.

Combat Bonuses: +1 to strike, parry and dodge from instinct driven reflexes that are the equivalent to a biological combat computer.

From Serpentine Lower Body: +1 initiative, +3 entangle, +5 to Auto-Dodge.

From Additional Pair of Arms: +1 attack, +1 to parry, disarm and entangle.

From Enhanced Neurological Connection: + 2 to initiative, + 1 to disarm, +2 automatic dodge.

From Metabolism: Bite: 3D8 M.D.*, +2 to parry, +1 to dodge, +4 to roll with fall, +3D6 M.D.C. (not added).

The mouth is that of a standard snake, just filled with rock-crushing teeth.

Dune Viper Bio-Weapon Systems:

1. Hand Scythes (2): +4D6 M.D. to punch damage.
2. Fire Breath: 3D12 M.D.
3. Casting Thrower: 1D8+3 M.D. per single shot or a four pellet burst that inflicts 3D8+3 M.D.

Hand to Hand Combat:

Tail Slash: 4D6 M.D.

Special Constrict/ Crush attack: see pages 91 and 92 of the **Splicers® RPG** for details.

Head butts, punches, and elbows all follow the standard damage based on the Splicer P.S. of the Host Armor; plus any additional damage due to weapons or enhancements.

Common Enhancements selected by the Dune Viper Dreadguards:

- The Scythe arms are commonly enhanced with Elongated Arms and Betrayal Blades (parallel development).
- Their speed is commonly enhanced to make them slither along the surface at a blinding pace or to swim beneath the sand.
- Plasma Breath.
- The 6 Glow Cells are enhanced to Super Light Cells damage and all 6 can fire at the same target with a combined damage of 1D6x10 M.D.
- Casting Thrower enhanced all the way to Casting Cannon.
- Ambidextrous.
- Regeneration Enhanced.

Note: Dune Viper enhances their Casting weapon along the standard path of Launcher, Rifle and Cannon.

Thorny Devil Host Armor

This Template Host Armor design is based off the Thorny Devil Lizard. This humanoid version has the same skin structure to that of this particular desert lizard, which enables the Host Armor to drink with its feet! This is achieved through capillary action on the surface of the skin, allowing water to be drawn up the body to the mouth. What this means is, the Host Armor only needs to stand or lay in a puddle, or dew covered sand or vegetation, and the water will travel up its body to the mouth. This is also effective for any blood or other drinkable liquid that splashes on the skin.

The Thorny Devil Host Armor is designed for long-term deployment in desert conditions. It has a tough, durable hide the color of sand for additional camouflage. Dreadguards are usually partnered up with an Outrider who has a War Mount equipped with a double-seated war saddle or they ride a Mega-Horse that has been Bio-Engineered by the Red Sands with a fitted Breather for handling the harsh desert climate or they foot it like the rest of the Heavy Infantry.

Class: Elite Host Armor.

Level: First.

Bio-E Remaining: 20

M.D.C. by Location:

Arms (2) – 107 each

Hands (2) – 77 each

Legs (2) – 127 each

Feet (2) – 97 each

Head – 97

Prehensile Tail, Lizard-Style – 75 (13 feet/4 m)

Casting Thrower – 60

Bio-Energy Expulsion Vent – 45

Retractable Frill (2) – 25 each

Main Body – 330

Speed:

Running: 100 mph (160 km) on hard ground. 80-85 mph (128-136 km) on sand with Sand Feet; 50 mph (80 km) on sand without Sand Feet.



Leaping: 20 feet (6.1 m) high, 40 feet (12.2 m) across; half on sand without Sand Feet.

Digging: 10 mph (16 km) through dirt and sand, 2.5 mph (4 km) through solid rock and concrete.

Swimming: 30 mph (48 km/26 knots). Swimming tires the pilot, but at 10% the usual rate.

Underwater Depth: 700 feet (213.4 m).

Flying: Not possible, unless Enhancement is selected later.

Statistical Data:

Height, Width and Length: Standard for Host armor.

Weight: Adds 400 lbs (180 kg) to the weight of the pilot.

Cargo: None, other than what the character can carry.

Physical Strength: 25, Splicers P.S.

Production Cycle, Lifespan, Horror Factor: Standard.

Bio-Regeneration: Enhanced.

Senses & Features: Seismic Sense, Dry Muscle, Sand Feet*, Armored Eyes, Enhanced Neurological Connection, Resistant to Heat, Prehensile Tail, Skin Capillary Action**, Regeneration Enhanced, Quick Clotting Blood, and Reinforced Exoskeleton, plus base instinct skills of Dowsing 60%, Excavation/Mining 50%, Land Navigation 60% and Masonry 60%.

* Sand Feet is a new physical enhancement in which there is a modification to the shape of the foot that allows those with the modification to move at 70-75% of their maximum speed when running on the soft, collapsible sand of the desert. The toes are elongated and have broad fat pads. Cost is 10 Bio-E Points.

** The skin of the Host Armor mimics both the cosmetic appearance and function of the Thorny Devil Lizard. Their skin has an amazing capillary action that allows the lizard to simply have their skin make contact with some level of moisture (dew on grass, the wet ground after rain, etc.) and the water will travel up the skin from its feet to its mouth. The skin can even remove the salt from ocean water, so by the time it reaches the mouth it is fresh water.

Feeding/Metabolism: Lithovore.

Sleep Requirements: The Host Armor requires 3D4 hours of sleep/rest/inactivity per day, during the day or night.

Combat Bonuses: +1 to strike, parry and dodge from instinct driven reflexes that are the equivalent to a biological combat computer.

When using Combat Spurs: +1 to strike and +2 to parry.

From Metabolism: Bite: 3D8 M.D., +2 to parry, +1 to dodge, +3 to roll with fall.

From Enhanced Neurological Connection: +2 on initiative +1 to disarm, +2 to Automatic Dodge.

From Reinforced Exoskeleton: 1D6 head butt, an extra +3D6 to running ram/body block, +2D6 to punches elbows and kicks, +1 roll with punch, fall or impact.

The mouth: Standard for a lizard, except it is full of thick, rock-crushing teeth.

Thorny Devil Bio-Weapon Systems:

1. Combat Spurs: +4D6 M.D.
2. Bio-Energy Expulsion Vents (2): 2D8 +P.E. M.D. for each shot.
3. Needle Death Blossom: A single needle does one M.D., a small volley does 1D8 M.D., a medium volley does 2D8 M.D., and a large volley does 4D8 M.D. Releasing most (80-100%) at once inflicts 1D12x10 M.D. within a 30 foot (9.1 m) radius.

4. Casting Thrower: 1D8+3 M.D. per single shot or a four pellet burst that inflicts 3D8+3 M.D.

Hand to Hand Combat: Head butts, punches, elbows, kicks and knees all follow the standard damage based on the Splicer's P.S. of the Host Armor; plus any additional damage due to possible head weapons or enhancements.

Common Enhancements Selected by Thorny Devil Dreadguards:

It is recommended that at Level 2, with the 20 remaining Bio-E, that the Dreadguard selects the weapon Casting Blunderbuss (See later description).

- The Casting Thrower is upgraded to a Casting Blunderbuss (See later description).
- Bio-Energy Blades for Bio-Energy Expulsion Vents.
- Combat Tail.
- The jaw is Reinforced & Saber Teeth added.

Red Sands

War Mounts

Desert Judge War Mount

"The desert judges everyone equally. We just gave it teeth." – A common Red Sands Outrider slogan.

The Desert Judge is a giant, 60 foot (18.3 m), serpent-styled War Mount used as a heavy food transport, heavy fire support for the infantry and also anti-air defense. It is currently, the largest War Mount made by the House of Red Sands, and is a formidable creature in its own right. The War Mount's primary genetic template is a combination of a desert viper with its head resembling a hog-nosed snake, fused with the Frill-Necked Lizard. It was designed to evoke fear and to be a foreboding presence as a defender of the House. As is the case with many of the House's War Mounts, including the Nova Hawk, the Desert Judge is also a hunter sent out into the woodlands and preserves located along the edge of the desert to kill and collect food, and bring it back inside the War Mount's internal food pouches. This gathered food is transported back to the haven and is used to sustain the house's Gene Pools and to feed the Hydrant Ants, War Mounts, Host Armors and even the population of the Desert Rose.

The Desert Judge's signature weapon is a new bio weapon that uses strong intakes behind the head and along the upper neck to suck in loose sand and blow it out at extremely high forces that can trigger or create miniature dust storms. When the mouth is 95% closed and only a slight gap is open at the tip, the same blast becomes an abrasive sand blaster that can slowly peel through exposed flesh or thin layers of light armor. The purpose of these heavy sand blowers is not to cause heavy amounts of initial damage, but to conceal the Desert Judge and set the stage for the hunt. By creating thick, massive dust clouds that cover a 30-50 foot (9 to 15.2 m) radius and height, the Bio-Engineered serpent uses its seismic senses to gain an advantaged position below the sand or behind its opponents or outright launching its weapons at them.

The Dust Clouds are made of the desert's heated sand particles which obscures vision in and through the cloud from those on the inside and outside of it. Infrared, passive night vision nor thermo-imagers will not be able to penetrate the dust cloud or be effectively used inside one. Those caught inside will be blinded. Anyone not in environmentally sealed armor or protected with a gas mask and goggles will be -5 to strike, parry and dodge and -1 on initiative. Attackers firing into/through the cloud will be shooting wildly at a moving target (-7 total to Strike). Visibility for anyone caught in the periphery of the dust cloud is reduced to 20 feet (6 m) and suffers -2 to strike, parry and dodge. **Note:** Red Sands Outriders have learned that if they can hit machines with sand on the optic lenses, cameras, and goggles with a Lightning strike, that the sand stuck to these parts will instantly become fulgurate glass and totally blind the robots (-10 to strike for Machines), until removed.

Seasoned Outriders have learned that in the right conditions (temperature, wind direction and velocity) that the Desert Judge's Haboon Dust Blasters can instigate much larger dust storms. (Game Master's call on the conditions, and has a 20% chance when conditions are good. -15% if conditions are poor.) These rolling dust storms can go on for miles and grow to epic proportions before they dissipate. They help conceal large patrols on the move from the machine's watchful eyes and sensors. The Dust Storms are also used to deter incoming enemy threats or slow them down, and force aerial reconnaissance and threats to immediately turn away or be grounded.

The Desert Judge War Mount is routinely trained to hate robots and machines, and fights them with savage ferocity whenever they are encountered. Despite its frightening, serpentine appearance, the Desert Judge War Mount is fiercely loyal to its rider. A good thing considering the two often spend weeks at a time together patrolling the desert, venturing into woodlands and preserves to hunt and bring back food, and fighting various enemies.

The War Saddle for this creature has a unique feature to allow the Outrider to shift positions while riding. When the hood of the Desert Judge is down, the rider sits behind it, but when the hood deploys like the famous Frill-Necked Lizard, it offers the Rider even greater protection, and when necessary, the Outrider can slide forward to duck completely behind the hood. The Desert Judge's Hood is semi-transparent and rather functions like a tinted shield or one way-mirror and windshield for the Outrider on its back. This means from his position, the Rider can see through the tinted War Mount's hood, but those in front of the serpent cannot easily see the rider behind the hood. He is little more than a distinct shadow or blurred shape that could be the rider or a trick of light and motion.

Like most snakes, the Desert Judge is a patient, stealthy hunter willing to watch and wait for the right moment to strike. This makes them efficient as they don't waste or expend much energy in the relentless heat of the desert. The giant snakes are kept well fed and isolated from the rest of the War Mounts and Host Armor, as their hunger and reptilian brains can sometimes get the better of the viper. A hungry or angry Desert Judge has been known to attack an innocent passer-by, livestock or another War Mount. It is only the animal's strong loyalty to their rider that prevents them from ever attacking that particular individual. However, the viper must try very hard not to eat their rider's kinsmen, i.e. other humans. (Xeric Guards don't count.) Thankfully, humans

are generally the last prey on the creature's list of prey, but they are on the list.

Class: Heavy Patrol, Hunter and Ambush War Mount.

Crew: One Rider toward the head and behind the hood-like frill it can raise.

M.D.C. by Location:

Hood/Shield Behind Head – 240

*Organic Thruster, Not for Flight (2) – 130 each

Rider's War Saddle – 100

* Tail Light Cell Cannon (1) – 60

* Eyes (4; two pairs) – 15 each

Mouth/Teeth – 100

Fangs (2) – 42 each

Tentacle Harpoon Tongue – 60

** Head – 220

*** Main Body – 550

* A single asterisk indicates a small, low profile, or shielded target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a "Called Shot" to hit such targets, and even then is -3 to strike.

** Destroying the head eliminates all optics and sensory systems, reduces the maximum speed and number of attacks by half and eliminates all combat bonuses from the War Mount. However, the rider can still ride and fire weapon systems for up to 8 hours after the head is gone.

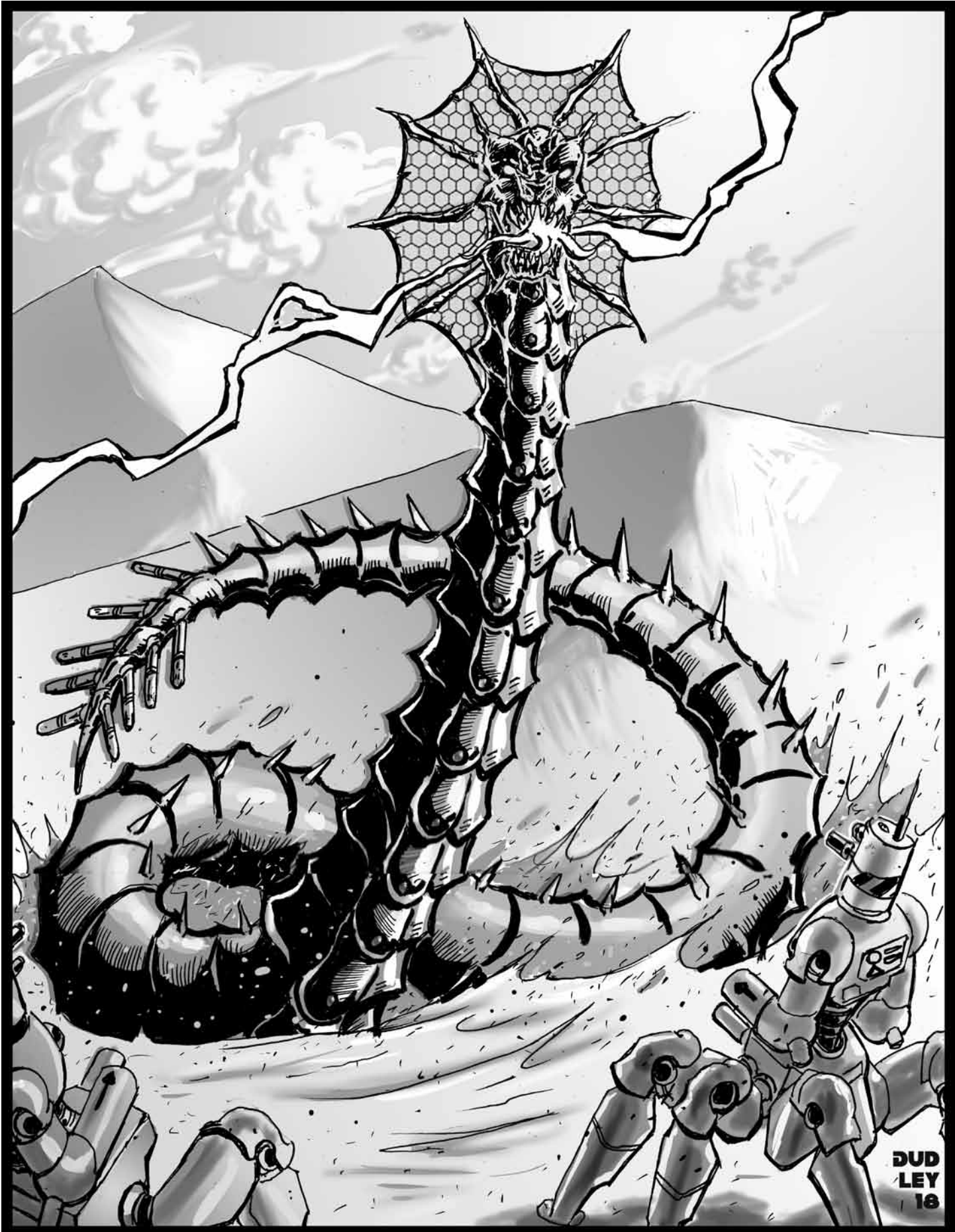
*** Depleting the Main Body M.D.C. to zero (or less) slays and destroys the War Mount.

Speed:

Running/Slithering: 100 mph (160 km) maximum, but normal cruising speed is 50 mph (80 km). The Desert Judge can reach speeds of 150 mph (240 km) for a period of 1D4 minutes. After which it must reduce its speed to cruising for the next 3D6 minutes or exhaust itself. When exhausted, the serpent's maximum speed for the next 20 minutes is 30 mph (48 km) and reduce the number of attacks per melee round and combat bonuses by half (round down). **Note:** The War Mount can slither all day long at cruising speed without fatigue, but is only able to maintain its maximum speed for 1D4 hours at a time, before requiring an hour of rest or slow movement (30 mph/48 km) in between each full speed session.

Climbing: The Desert Judge is capable of slithering up inclines as steep as 65 degrees at 30-50 mph (48 to 80 km). However, steeper inclines and climbing up smooth surfaces are NOT possible. That said, the Desert Judge (like many ordinary snakes) are capable of climbing a sheer cliff facing, provided if there are enough rocks, small ledges and/or vegetation protruding from the wall that the snake can grab with its muscular body and push off in order to scale the cliff. Maximum climbing speed up a seemingly sheer cliff wall (but with sufficient outcroppings, small ledges and stones to climb) is 10-15 mph (16 to 24 km). If the surface of the sheer cliff wall is a textured or rough surface but otherwise smooth and featureless, the serpent cannot climb it. Massive trees, pillars and posts strong enough to support the creature's size and weight can be climbed by curling around it; maximum speed is half the normal rate.

Leaping: Not possible. However, the serpent can rise up on the back half of its body and strike/lunge to bite or otherwise attack up to a distance of 30 feet (9.1 m). It can also rise 30 feet (9.1 m) tall.



Digging: 20 mph (32 km) through sand or dirt. 10 mph (16 km) when digging through clay, rock, or stone. Digging does not tire the War Mount, and it can dig a hole deep enough to completely hide itself quite fast. In sand and soil it only takes two melee actions to bury itself fully, but in clay, rock or stone it takes an entire minute.

Swimming: 50 mph (80 km). This does not tire the War Mount or its rider.

Maximum Underwater Depth: 2,000 feet (610 m), but most riders cannot tolerate depths greater than 700 feet (213 m).

Flying: Not possible.

Statistical Data:

Diameter: 3-4 feet (0.9 to 1.2 m) thick at its center, and gets smaller at the head and tail.

Length: 60-70 feet (18.3 to 21.33 m).

Weight: 6-8 tons (due to dry muscle).

Cargo: Up to 4 tons can be pulled behind the Desert Judge, if towed on a wheeled or sled platform, with a harness that is designed to fit around the War Mount's head. If a harness is utilized, the hood of the War Mount cannot be deployed and therefore cannot provide additional protection for the Rider.

Physical Strength: 1D4+30, Supernatural.

Production Cycle: 4.5 years gestation, plus 8 years growth time.

Operational Lifetime: 80 years.

Trade Value: 7-8 million credits for an undamaged unit.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 5D6 M.D.C. per hour for the main body, and 2D6 per hour for every other region.

Horror Factor: 15 against humans not accustomed to the beast, 13 for Splicers, none against the Machine.

Senses & Features: Standard for War Mounts. Also, Seismic Senses, Resistance to Heat, Enhanced passive Night Vision (light amplification) 6,000 feet (1,829 m), Skin Capillary Action*, Fangs and Venom, Gills for breathing underwater**, Dry Muscle, Food Pouches and altered Physiology (for retention of water).

Food Pouches (Special): The War Mount has the unique ability to store a large quantity of food in pouches inside its body. This provides sustained nourishment for the creature up to 15 days when prey is not available. The serpent can store nearly one ton of organic matter in its pouches along its throat. For every 220 lbs (99 kg) of food stored internally, reduce the same amount of weight that the War Mount is able to carry or drag. The storage of food in these concealed, internal pouches expands the width of its body below the head and neck. The pouches are often used to deliver food from a successful hunt back to the House of Red Sands to feed other war mounts, Host Armors and even people, as well as to hold and deliver genetic specimens for further study and use.

Venom: Viral Immobilizer venom with fangs as the delivery system.

* The Skin has the same function as the Thorny Devil Host Armor, but not the thorny appearance, but it does have the same sand colored skin tones as that of the Host Armor.

** The gills only provide oxygen for the Desert Judge and not its rider.

Sleep Requirements: Only needs four hours of sleep every day.

Feeding: The Desert Judge is a carnivore, and the War Mount requires 143–187 lbs (64–84 kg) of food, live prey or fresh meat, every day.

Other Data (used when the War Mount is without a rider):

Alignment: Considered Anarchist. Like most ambush predators, the Desert Judge is patient, stealthy and surprisingly fast when it attacks. It defends itself when threatened, and flees if it is outnumbered, but is a deadly predator that hunts other medium to large animals, including people. However, it is wary of humans and Splicers from other Great Houses and tends to attack adult humans as a last resort, unless they are weak, injured or ailing.

War Mount Attributes: I.Q. 1D6 +7 (high animal intelligence), M.E. 2D4+6, M.A. 1D4+5, P.S. 2D4+32 (Supernatural P.S.), P.P. 1D4+18, P.E. 2D4+18, Spd 3D4+134 (approximately 100 mph/160 km; see Speed, above, for details).

Number of Attacks per Melee: Four.

Combat Bonuses (in addition to any possible attribute bonuses or enhancements): +1 initiative, +2 strike with range weapons, +3 strike with bites, head butts, Harpoon Tongue and other physical attacks, +3 to automatic dodge (bobs and weaves), +5 to roll with impact, +5 to save vs poison and disease, and completely immune to Horror Factor.

Equivalent "Instinctual" Skills of Note: Climb 90%, Hunting 75%, Land Navigation 85%, Language: understands the words of its rider/House of Red Sands 80% (cannot speak), Prowl 60% (+10% at night), Swim 70%, Track by scent 75%, and Wilderness Survival 88%.

Combat Capabilities: The Desert Judge possesses natural weapons that enables it to engage in long-range or close-quarters combat, or a combination of the two.

Bite/Fangs: 3D6+ M.D.

Venomous Ant-Machine Attack: See Viral Immobilizer, page 106 of the Splicers(RPG).

Restrained Head Butt: 1D4 M.D.

Full Strength Head Butt: 2D6 M.D.

Power Head Butt: 4D6 but counts as two attacks.

Body Block/Ram 1D4x10 M.D. and has a 01-60% chance of knocking an opponent up to 15 feet tall (4.6 m) off their feet and onto their back. If so, the target loses initiative and two melee attacks. A body block/ram counts as one attack for the Desert Judge.

Tail Swipe: 4D6 M.D.

Also see Harpoon Tongue, Sand Breath and other Bio-Weapons.

Desert Judge Bio-Weapon Systems:

1. Haboon Dust Blasters: This new breath bio-weapon utilizes bio-intakes located behind the jaws and upper neck to vacuum up large volumes of loose sand and blow it out of the maw at extremely high forces. These blasts create large dust clouds. When the mouth is closed it can focus a blast to become an abrasive sand blaster that can slowly peel exposed flesh or thin layers off of light armor.

Primary Purpose: Defensive Concealment and Smoke Screening.

Secondary Purpose: Excavation and Close-Range Assault.

Mega-Damage: Each blast causes abrasive sand blaster-like damage to anything caught directly in the line of fire, and quickly peels exposed flesh or outer layers of light armor. The Desert Judge tends to do this to living creatures that it has coiled and is constricting. The damage caused by the sand blast is not an enormous amount in comparison to other weapons and is more of a strategic device.

Duration: Each sand blast lasts 2 melee rounds. However, a continuous or repeated Sand blast extends the size of the Dust Storm screen by an additional 15 feet (4.6 m) and adds an additional 2 melee rounds to the total duration.

Range: 100 feet (30.5 m) for a 40 foot (12.2 m) radius.

Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as one attack and can be utilized as a continuous blast up to the total amount of melee attacks allotted by the War Mount's number of attacks, not the combined number of attacks of the War Mount and Outrider.

Payload: The Desert Judge can only store and carry with it 12 blasts of sand before it needs to refill its ammo chambers (bladders) with sand. It takes 3 seconds for the Organic Thrusters to replenish the equivalent of one blast. Effectively unlimited when it is located on loose sand.

Bonus: +2 to strike with sand.

Penalties for the use of Sand Breath:

A. The snake cannot travel at fast speeds and unleash an effective Sand Breath at the same time. To use this weapon, it must remain still or move no faster than cruising speed. Of course, it must be in or on loose sand for this weapon to function.

B. Unable to use underwater or on gravel or mud.

2. Lightning Arc Thrower: Located in the hard top palate inside the Desert Judge's mouth is the organ that generates and fires bolts of lightning. This weapon can operate independently from the Haboon Dust Blasters to unleash bolts of electricity. The serpent must open its mouth and point its head to fire electrical discharges.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft and anti-Robot/Machines.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. and does an extra 2D6 M.D. to robots and machines that have their internal wiring exposed or have less than 30% of their main body M.D.C. remaining.

Rate of Fire: Five blasts per melee round, maximum.

Range: 100 feet (30.5 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Bonus: +1 to strike with lightning blast.

3. Organic Rockets (10): Adorning the tail are two rows of organic rockets that resembles the tail of a stegosaurus dinosaur. They are used as a surface-to-air weapon against long-range aerial threats. The Desert Judge will lie beneath the sand with only its eyes and snout and the tip of its tail above the ground, with each of the organic rockets targeting eyes licked clean and poking out of the sand, waiting to fire at machine aircraft and ground forces.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft and Anti-Robot.

Secondary Purpose: Assault and Defense.

Mega-Damage: 5D10 M.D. per individual organic rocket fired, with a blast radius of 10 feet (3 m).

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of 2, 4, 6 or 8. A volley counts as one melee attack. Roll once to strike, either all the rockets in the volley hit or they all miss.

Maximum Effective Range: One mile (1.6 km).

Payload: The tail carries a payload of 10 rockets, five on each side. The War Mount can manufacture enough rockets to replace its entire payload of rockets in 6D6 hours, but needs 300 pounds (135 kg) of food to make them.

4. Tentacle Harpoon Tongue: The tongue of the Desert Judge is based on the arms of the famous Grendel War Mount. A coiled

tentacle appendage tipped with a wicked, bony harpoon tip. This attack can be quite sudden, as the gaping maw filled with teeth distract you, the tentacle can be fired at its victim with considerable force.

M.D.C.: Elastic and strong, it requires 60 M.D. to sever the tentacle.

Primary Purpose: Assault (and to catch prey).

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 4D8 M.D. (See the complete description of Tentacle Harpoon on page 105 of the **Splicers® RPG**.)

Range: 60 feet (18.3 m).

Payload: It can be used repeatedly until severed or destroyed, but regrows in a matter of 1D6 days.

Bonus: +1 to strike.

5. Immobilizer Fangs (2): Housed in the maw of the Desert Judge are a pair of deadly fangs that can inject a potent dose of the Viral Immobilizer Venom. This injection is specifically aimed at the machines that lurk the deserts and nearby habitats.

M.D.C.: of each Fang: 4 M.D.C.

Length of each Fang: 3-4 feet (0.9 to 1.2 m).

Mega-Damage: Each fang delivers 1D4x10 M.D., but a successful bite with both fangs delivers 1D8x10 M.D. Once bitten, any mechanical or metal structure will also be injected with a Viral Immobilizer venom. A single dose of the venom will cause a shutdown in 6D6 minutes, but the viral cluster will completely infect, cover and immobilize most mechanical targets in just 2D4 melee rounds. Has no effect on the living nor organic materials.

Maximum Effective Range: Bite injection only, can not be sprayed (keep in mind the Desert Judge can strike out and bite up to 30 feet (9.1 m) away at an alarming speed.

Rate of Fire: Two viral attacks per melee round, each counting as one melee action/attack.

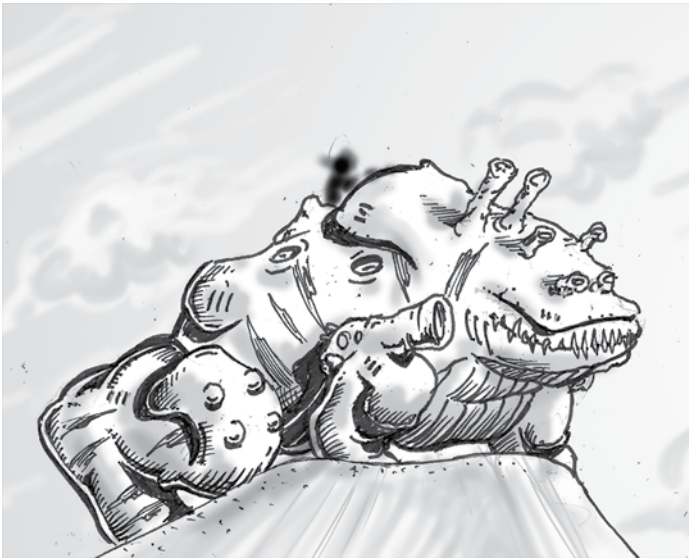
Payload: Approximately 24 doses are available for each fang housing (total 48) at any given moment. One spent dose is replenished every hour, so the rider should dispense this attack with due consideration when fighting many machines at once.

Bonus: A successful strike will cause immediate infection and quick immobilization (see **Splicers® RPG**, page 106 for complete details).

6. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use long-range weapons, the Desert Judge or its rider can engage in physical close (hand to hand) combat. The rider may also engage in hand to hand combat or use any handheld weapons or Host Armor weapon, but each attack counts as one of the combined melee attacks. However, as long as the rider and War Mount remain connected, their bonuses are combined as applicable to the specific type of weapon attack (i.e. combined hand to hand bonuses apply to all close combat, gun bonuses apply to lasers and ranged weapons, etc.).

Common Enhancements Selected by the Desert Judge Outriders:

- An additional pair of eyes incorporated in the tail so the War Mount can remain buried in the sand and only reveal its tail.
- Death Needle Blossom.



Molok War Mount

The warriors in the House of Red Sands desired a versatile War Mount that was both an artillery unit and ambush predator. The amalgamation of desired functions resulted in the creation of the Molok.

The Molok is a War Mount with an interesting blend of desert toad, shark, and lizard. It is versatile enough to be used for short patrols, defense and long-range scouting missions, but is used primarily against the machine constructs of N.E.X.U.S. and defense of the House and its holdings. Ironically, despite its long-range combat capabilities, the Molok's animal instincts and aggressive nature makes the War Mount prefer close combat, so it relishes every opportunity it can get to engage in physical combat.

Molok War Mounts are genetically designed to have two war saddles. One enables the Outrider to ride on its back and engage in combat. The other saddle is internal and enables the rider to survive inside the creature when the Molok buries itself deep in the sand for extended periods of time.

The main body of the Molok resembles that of a toad and desert lizard (goanna), which enables the War Mount to leap, climb and dig at exceptional speed. Genetic elements from the shark provide the Molok with a massive maw lined with three rows of serrated teeth ideal for tearing apart large robots and war machines and dismembering smaller opponents.

The Molok is one of three, primary, heavy War Mounts used by the House of Red Sands. It patrols the lands with the Desert Judge, while the Nova Hawk patrols the skies. This War Mount is also a bit of a contrast to a lot of other designs of the house, as they employ few weapons that require precious resources.

The skin of the Molok has the same look as the Thorny Devil Host Armor, and has the same unconventional means of gathering water. The Molok's two pairs of eyes are armored and compounded, so they are not bothered by sand or dust, and both are built into extendable stalks, enabling the Molok to have one or both pairs sitting in the eye socket of the skull or extended outward to see in all directions. The stalks can extend up to three feet (0.9 m) from the skull, and serve as optical periscopes when buried under sand or to look around corners.

Though designed for desert operation, the Molok War Mount has gills and swimming capabilities that enables it to stay sub-

merged underwater indefinitely and provide enough oxygen for its Outrider sitting in the retractable shelled saddle of the animal. The War Mount can swim on the surface of water or underwater and can survive in both fresh water and salt water.

Class: Heavy Patrol and Artillery War Mount suitable for field combat and defensive troop support.

Crew: One Rider, though it can carry two riders in Host Armor.

M.D.C. by Location:

** Head – 180

Maw/Mouth – 110

Forelegs (2) – 160 each

Rear Legs (2) – 200 each

* Webbed Claw Feet (4) – 100 each

* Eye Stalks and Armored Compound Eyes (4) – 50 each

External Rider's War Saddle – 100

**** Retractable Saddle Plating and Containment Bubble – 90 (15 for each plate)

* Retractable Casting Mortars (2) – 80 each

* Casting Blunderbuss (2) – 70 each

*** Main Body – 450

* A single asterisk indicates a small, low profile, or shielded target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a "Called Shot" to hit such targets, and even then is -3 to strike.

** Destroying the head will eliminate all optics and sensory systems, reduces the maximum speed and number of attacks by half and eliminates all combat bonuses from the War Mount. However, the rider can still fly and fire weapon systems for up to 8 hours after the head is gone.

*** Depleting the Main Body M.D.C. to zero (or less) destroys the War Mount.

**** Six retractable, flower-like pedals along the war saddle act as armored plating that can open or close around the Outrider to provide protection as well as filter and pump oxygen into the sealed chamber. This enables the Outrider to breath uninhibited in the mist of a dust storm or while being submerged under sand, underground or in toxic, polluted water. When not in use, the armored pedals fold almost seamlessly along the body of the war mount. HOWEVER, when the outrider is inside the war saddle containment bubble, the combined bonuses and number of attacks do NOT apply, as the Outrider can not utilize any of his weapons or Bio-Enhancements to attack enemies while in the bubble.

Speed:

Walking: A slow waddle at a maximum speed of 8 mph (12.8 km).

Running: 60 mph (96 km) on solid ground. On sand it runs and leaps at 50 mph (80 km). The Molok "runs" in a series of loping leaps low to the ground that covers considerable distance in a single bound. The War Mount is highly skilled at estimating distances, and has exceptional control over its leaps and can dramatically reduce the amount of sliding by splaying out its legs and feet to act as quick, shock absorbing stabilizers, enabling the Molok to accurately predict where it wants to land, stop or turn, even atop loose sand dunes.

Leaping: 30 feet (9.1 m) high or across from a standing position or double that with a running start.

Climbing: The Molok is capable of climbing or leaping up inclines as steep as 60 degrees and hang on via its lizard-like, clawed toes at full speed. However, steeper inclines and climbing

up smooth surfaces are NOT possible. If there is a ledge, trees or other high structures large enough and strong enough to support it, the Molok can leap from one to another.

Digging: The clawed feet of the Molok enables it to dig 20 mph (32 km) through sand & dirt, and 10 mph (16 km) through concrete or rock. Digging does not tire the War Mount, and it can dig a hole deep enough to completely bury itself and hide, unnoticed in sand and soil, in one melee round (15 seconds). In clay, rock or stone it takes two minutes.

Swimming: 40 mph (64 km). Maximum depth tolerance is 700 feet (213 m). Gills enable it to stay underwater indefinitely.

Flying: Not possible.

Statistical Data:

Height: 12 feet (3.7 m) tall.

Width: 7 feet (2.1 m) from shoulder to shoulder.

Length: 15 feet (4.6 m).

Weight: 3.5 tons.

Cargo: The Molok can carry one ton on its back and pull up to 5 tons on a wheeled wagon or on a sled across loose sand or dirt; double that weight when pulling a barge, raft or boat when the Molok is swimming, but reduce swimming speed to 10 mph (16 km).

Physical Strength: 1D4+30 Supernatural P.S.

Production Cycle: 3 years gestation plus four years growth time.

Operational Lifetime: 80 year life span (30 years more than most War Mounts of similar scale due to **Decreased Metabolic Rate**). This is part of the Red Sands Biotech ingenuity as the House plans for the impending war. They want their War Mounts to be mature, long-term surviving, fully equipped beasts that are primed for the day the House of Red Sands enters into the Final War. So while most other Great Houses will have gone through so many prime War Mount specimens that have died off, the Red Sands' War Mounts will be seasoned and fully loaded with an arsenal of Biotech weapons and enhancements. It is an investment approach that the House feels will pay off in the long term.

Trade Value: 4-6 million credits for a healthy, undamaged animal.

Bio-Regeneration: 4D6 M.D.C. per hour for the Main Body, and 2D6 M.D.C. per hour for every other region. Is capable of completely regrowing teeth or an eye and eye stalk within 3D6+18 hours, and toes, feet, legs within 1D8+4 days.

Horror Factor: 12 for humans outside of the Resistance, none against the machines.

Sensors & Features: Standard, plus four retractable and extendible Eye-Stalks with compound eyes that enable it to peer above the sand while remaining hidden beneath it; Decreased Metabolic Rate (see New Bio-Enhancements below), Resistance to Heat, Enhanced Passive Night Vision (light amplification, 6,000 feet/1,829 m), Telescopic Vision that enables the Molok to see clearly up to two miles (3.2 km), Dry Muscle and Altered Physiology (for retention of water) and Skin Capillary Action. The Molok and Desert Judge War Mounts have the same skin as the Thorny Devil Host Armor, and can get water the same way as the Host Armor.

Feeding: The Molok is a carnivore and requires 80-100 lbs (36 to 45 kg) of raw meat and bones, or live prey, per day. However, the Molok can gorge up to 400 lbs (180 kg) at one sitting and store the extra food in its tail as an energy reserve. It can use this excess storage to extend its duration without requiring food as often by using its **Decreased Metabolic Rate** enhancement; see descrip-

tion below. Instead of eating every day, the Molok only has to consume its daily requirement every 3-4 days before feeling any ill effects. Once the War Mount begins to rely solely on its tail storage, its intensity and activity are reduced to half (reduce all melee attacks/actions and bonuses by half). This works well in the desert climate where prey is not plentiful and Outriders are expected to patrol or patiently sit in the dunes for long periods of time. The Molok's Decreased Metabolic Rate allows the War Mount to function and survive in harsh, desolate habitats where most other carnivorous War Mounts and Host Armors would perish.

Sleep Requirements: The Molok requires only five hours of sleep every day.

Other Data (used when the War Mount is without a rider):

Alignment: Considered Anarchist. The Molok is patient and calm when waiting to attack as well as when the War Mount comes under fire. When threatened or attacked, it defends itself, and flees only if it is outnumbered. An aggressive carnivorous predator with shark, lizard and toad DNA, it attacks with deadly and merciless intensity, but only when hungry or when commanded to fight by its rider. As an animal, it is indifferent about humans and machines, and only does what it is told by an Outrider or Packmaster.

War Mount Attributes: I.Q. 1D4+3 (low animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+8, M.A. 1D4+1, P.S. (see above, for details), P.P. 1D6+17, P.E. 2D4+16, Spd 88 (60 mph/96 km; see above for details).

Number of Attacks per Melee: Five.

Combat Bonuses (in addition to any possible attribute bonuses or enhancements): +2 on initiative, +3 on Perception Rolls, +3 to strike with ranged weapons, +3 to strike in close combat/hand to hand, +4 dodge, +4 roll with impact, and is completely immune to Horror Factor.

Equivalent "Instinctual" Skills of Note: Climb 65%, Land Navigation 75%, understand the language of the House 85%, Prowl 50%, Swim 90%, Track by scent 60%, and Wilderness Survival 90%.

Combat Capabilities: The Molok can engage in ranged or close-quarter combat, or a combination of the two.

Nipping Bite: 1D6 M.D.

Full Strength Bite: 3D8 M.D.

Power Bite: 1D4x10 M.D. but counts as two melee attacks.

Leaping Body Block/Ram 5D8 M.D. and has an 85% chance of knocking an opponent up to 15 feet (4.6 m) tall off its feet and onto its back. If so, the target loses initiative and two melee attacks. A leaping body block/ram counts as two attacks for the Molok.

Restrained Claw Strike: 1D8 M.D.

Claw Strike: 4D8 M.D.

Power Claw Strike: 1D4x10+6 M.D. but counts as two attacks.

Molok Bio-Weapon Systems:

1. Casting Blunderbuss Cannons (2): Built into each of the shoulders is a short-range, wide-barreled Casting Blunderbuss cannon. It brings a little extra kick into close combat situations and has a maximum horizontal arc of 225 degrees and 45 degrees vertically.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Personnel and Anti-Machine.

Mega-Damage: 1D8x10 M.D.

Range: 60 feet (18.3 m).

Payload: Each Blunderbuss has 12 shots and ammunition is replenished 2D10+20 minutes after each meal.

Rate of Fire: Each shot counts as one attack. Both Blunderbusses can be fired simultaneously at the same target and counts as one attack.

2. Pod Mortar Cannons (2): Built into its upper back are a pair of extendable Pod Cannons similar to that of a mortar that adds an explosive area of effect weapon to the Molok's arsenal. Each Pod Cannon fires one spiraling shell at a time that bursts open into smaller seeds that explode upon impact. The explosive combustion sprays the seed's fragmented shells at such high velocity, that it turns the shrapnel into deadly shards causing fragmentation damage to the targeted area.

A common tactic is for the Molok to remain concealed beneath the sand or water, with only the War Mount's eye stalks and mortar ports visible (the Outrider lying tightly against the War Mount's back). Only an alert, savvy enemy will notice the small, low-profile objects protruding from the surface. Since the Molok is also amphibious, the launch ports can be sealed with an annular muscle that operates like the blow holes of aquatic mammals. The cannons' barrels are also collapsible, with a structure similar to that of a wind pipe (trachea) as it consists of a series of annular cartilaginous rings combined with hydrostatic muscles. In order for the Molok to use the Pod Mortar cannons, it simply pumps more blood into the hydrostatic muscles, allowing them to extend the barrels. **Note:** Each Pod mortar Cannon costs 40 Bio-E each, and up to two additional Pod Mortar Cannons can be added onto the lower back.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Machine and Artillery troop Support.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Armor and Heavy Assault.

Mega-Damage: 5D10 M.D. per individual round fired, with a blast radius of 20 feet (6.1 m). In addition, the explosive damage the fragmented shells are instantly turned into deadly flying shrapnel shards that inflict an additional 2D10 M.D. to everything within a 50 foot (15.2 m) range. The only way to avoid the fragmentation damage is to dodge behind something large and heavy or by digging deep enough and being covered up with enough sand. (**Note:** Damage is increased proportionally by the number of mortars fired.)

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of 2 (4 if two mortars are added). Each volley counts as one melee attack/action.

Range: 3,000 feet (914 m). Cannot use mortars to hit anything closer than 1,000 feet (305 m).

Payload: 20 shells per cannon and the War Mount can regenerate all spent shells in 1D4+4 hours but needs 80 lbs (36 kg) of food to do that.

3. Trench Foot Mines (8): Adorning each hind leg are four bulbous Trench Mines that the Molok can just drop or drop and bury into the sand. It doesn't take long for these sickly, greenish-black bulbs to be completely covered by windblown sand. They are used to create a minefield for invaders like machines, Waste Crawlers, alien predators and scouting parties of rival houses to navigate through. When so desired, Moloks and their Outriders will spend time burying these mines at various depths to create a perimeter defense that can be a major deterrent. Being such exceptional climbers and swimmers, mines can be placed nearly anywhere that can support a Molok or its Outrider's weight.

M.D.C. of the Mines: Each mine has only 1D6 M.D.C. points, but they are small targets and -4 to hit on a "Called Shot."

Mega-Damage: 4D12 M.D. per mine to a 10 foot (3 m) blast radius.

Rate of Fire: Takes one melee attack/action to flick with a rear kick or to drop one Trench Foot Mine. Moloks are able to drop or flick one Trench Foot Mine from each hind leg at the same time which only counts as one melee action. The mines remain dormant until stepped on or struck. At the end of three years they dry up and become inert.

Payload: 8 Total, four on each hind leg. Each mine requires 24 hours to grow back.

Note: Trench Foot Mines give off the Red Sands' signature chemical scent that only Splicers, ants and War Mounts of that House are able to detect! This way they are aware of mine locations, and can easily avoid them or depending on the situation, lead enemies right to them.

Game Master's Note: Remember, it is no fun to just blow up a player character or his War Mount, particularly if they have had very little or no chance to prevent the death of their character. Please be sure to role-play these scenarios out and give player characters fair warning and a chance to turn back or figure out a way through a minefield without everyone dying! Always keep entertainment, fun and role-playing in mind.

4. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use long-range weapons, the rider or riderless animal can engage in hand to hand combat using its claws, teeth and Bio-Weapons. The rider may also use any handheld weapons or Host Armor weapons, but each attack counts as one of the combined melee attacks. Of course, as long as the rider and War Mount remain connected, their bonuses are combined as applicable to the specific type of weapon attack (i.e. combined hand to hand bonuses apply to all close combat, gun bonuses apply to lasers and ranged weapons, etc.).

Hydrant Ant

A Genetically Engineered Domestic Animal

"Hydrants never go out of their way to save or take care of another ant. They just go in to get the job done."

– *Colonial Shepherd, Vita Nasik*

Ants are ultimately loyal, operating and fighting as a "super-organism" rather than individuals. Even the most patriotic humans are not comparable. Hydrants are permanently indentured to their society. While the ants readily die for their community, they are also remarkably pragmatic and methodical when it comes to their duties — a characteristic humans rarely emulate. Such a wonderful species was an ideal candidate for genetically engineering a quick, fast army to fight the Machine. The fear of adding a new un-controllable enemy to the already war-torn and monster-ridden planet, teeming with dangers, however, made the Ustad council and Librarians defer to a more urgent purpose and practical use for the ants, gathering water.

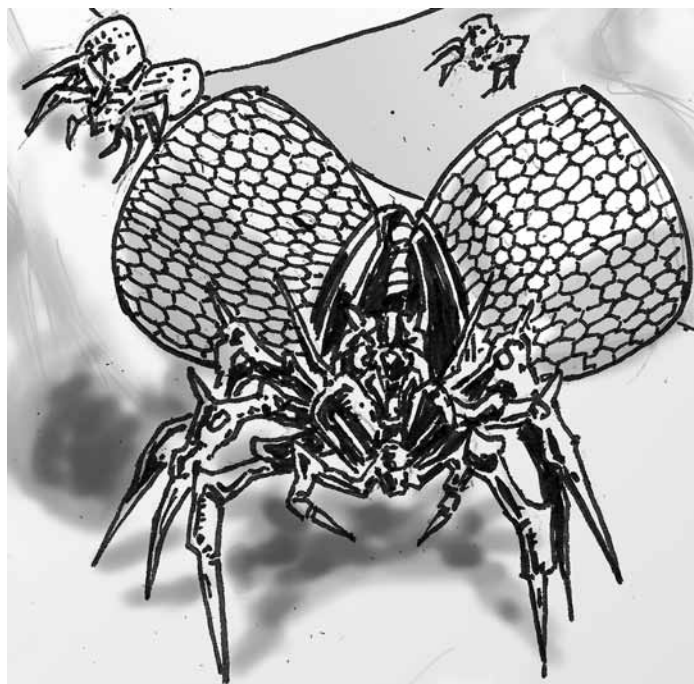
Unlike most Bio-Engineered creatures, the Hydrant Ant is not bred specifically for war nor released by the N.E.X.U.S. personality Gaia to hunt invasive Splicers. Instead it was designed to be a roaming animal that gathers, purifies and generates fresh water

and helps pollinate natural habitats. The so-called Hydrant is a giant, genetically engineered version of a honey pot ant, increased to the size of a very large dog or medium-sized deer. These creatures are omnivorous and their sole purpose is to manufacture water through aerobic metabolism of carbohydrates and fats, and store it in their distended abdomen. Each Hydrant can store up to 300 gallons (1,135.6 liters) of water in its bloated and expanded abdomen. The Hydrant Ant can also consume and store water and other liquids it may find, and in the process, filters and purifies any water it drinks.

Hydrant Ants can be found anchored to the ceilings of the Desert Rose, outposts and caves, grazing all day on food delivered to them. The metabolism of water from fat and carbohydrates is a natural process in animals (even humans), but the process is amplified considerably in the design of the Hydrant to enable it to produce the amounts of water it does, much like the quantity of milk produced by a dairy cow. **Note:** A typical outpost houses 50-100 Hydrants storing up to 40,000 gallons (151,416 liters) of water at that location.

Hydrants do not need to drink water themselves, as all their water requirements are obtained by the food they eat and sustained by their aerobic metabolism. However, they can consume water and liquids as the fluid is drawn up through capillary action or wicking, as ants do not have lungs. When the liquid is drawn in, it goes through a filtration and purification process. This means the giant ant can drink water that would normally be undrinkable for humans, and clean and purify it into clean, drinkable water. Ideal for people to survive in a desert environment, and a huge breakthrough for the genetic engineers at the House of Red Sands.

To access the water supply of the Hydrant, they are “milked” via a number of small tentacles distributed across the abdomen. Hydrants however, are not able to remove the radioactive iodines found in contaminated fall-out water in the Wastelands. So far, the ants have never been sent out into the Wastelands, but if they ever were and drank radioactive water, the ants themselves would become contaminated! Thankfully, such ants would die from the radiation long before they returned to their desert home with the



deadly water inside of them. For this reason, the ants and the fluids they contain are tested and examined upon their return and before approved for drinking.

Hydrants are not aggressive creatures and try to avoid combat. They will, however, defend themselves if attacked and will converge in large numbers on rival colonies and machine armies, using similar fighting tactics employed by their tiny, natural ant cousins.

Class: Genetically engineered animal and livestock. It can, of course, be used by an Outrider as a makeshift War Mount in a pinch.

Crew: None, as a rule. Instead they are looked after by a specialized group of ant scientists call Myrmecologists.

M.D.C. by Location:

- ** Head – 65
- * Eyes (2) – 10 each
- Mandibles – 25 per pincer
- *** Main Body (Upper): Thorax – 100
- *** Main Body (lower): Abdomen – 120
- * Legs (6) – 50 each

* A single asterisk indicates a small, low profile, or shielded target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a “Called Shot” to hit such targets, and even then is -3 to strike.

** Destroying the head eliminates all optics and sensory systems, reduces the maximum speed and number of attacks by half and eliminates all combat bonuses from the War Mount. However, the rider can still ride and direct the creature for up to 6 hours after the head is gone.

*** Depleting the Main Body of the Thorax (M.D.C. reduced to zero or less) kills the Hydrant. Depleting the Main Body of the Abdomen mortally wounds the creature and it dies in less than 30 minutes. Until then, reduce speed and the number of attacks and bonuses by half; round down. With the Abdomen destroyed, it continues to suffer 10 M.D.C. damage every minute, cannot regenerate damage, and will die.

Speed:

Running: 55 mph (88 km) when empty. 30 mph (48 km) half full. Reduce speed to only 10 mph (16 km) when the abdomen is enlarged to full or near full. Hydrants must slow down to almost a complete stop in order to make sharp turns.

Climbing: The Hydrant is capable of climbing up the sides of walls and walk along ceilings at full speed when empty. Reduce speed by half when climbing smooth surfaces and cannot hang upside down on smooth surfaces for more than 1D4 minutes.

Leaping: Not possible whether the giant ant is full or empty.

Digging: 20 mph (32 km) through sand and dirt, half that through rock and concrete, and only 2 mph (3.2 km) when the abdomen is half full or greater.

Swimming: The Hydrants can float and paddle in water at 10 mph (16 km); half as fast when its abdomen is more than half full. Cannot swim underwater and will drown. They are able to inflate their abdomens with available air in order to float for an extended time (1D4 hours) when they tire from moving, but they also become easily disorientated. Once they find land, they will be reluctant to return to the water unless commanded. Hydrants, like most ants, use scent trails to mark direction for other ants to follow, but in the water this is not possible and they feel isolated and begin to panic if they are unable to detect the faintest scent of their colony; reduce number of attacks and all combat bonuses by half.

Flying: Not possible.

Statistical Data:

Height: 3.5 feet (1 m).

Length: 6 feet (1.8 m), but expands to 9 feet (2.7 m) long and 4 feet (1.2 m) round when the abdomen is fully distended and filled.

Width: 2 feet (0.6 m). 4 feet (1.2 m) when filled to maximum capacity.

Weight: 400-440 pounds (180-198 kg) normal, but nearly 2 tons when its abdomen tanks are completely full of water. 100 gallons = 835 pounds. (400 gallons = 3,340 pounds/about 1.5 tons). **Note**: Honeycomb chamber tanks make up the expandable, refillable water reservoir of the Hydrant's abdomen, so if it is damaged, the other chambers immediately close and avoid losing all of the water.

Caro: A Hydrant Ant that is not bloated can carry up to 1,000 pounds (450 kg) on its back, drag one ton on a wheeled flatbed or wagon. Cannot pull or carry cargo when the abdomen is distended more than 33%.

Physical Strength: 1D6+20, Supernatural P.S.

Production Cycle: 3 months gestation, and 8 months growth time.

Operational Lifetime: 10 years. This is due to the toll it takes on the animal to constantly graze and be regularly drained/milked. If one was free to roam and only eat enough to survive it could live for 1D4+20 years.

Trade Value: 50,000-80,000 credits for one healthy, undamaged giant insect. Due to their importance to the survival of the House of Red Sands, they are not for sale and defended with utmost savagery.

Bio-Regeneration: 2D6 per hour for the main body, 1D6 per hour for all other regions.

Horror Factor: 8 for humans as insects creep out most people even when harmless. 6 for Splicers. Add +5 to Horror Factor when Hydrants are in a group of 6 to 12. Converging swarms that are more than 30 insects have a Horror Factor of 17. None against the Machine.

Senses & Feature: Standard, plus, Biting Mandibles, Dry Muscle and altered Physiology (for water conversion and storage).

Feeding: Hydrants are omnivores, which means they can eat anything organic: meat, grains, grass, weeds, leaves, bones, garbage, carrion, etc. They only require 8-15 pounds (3.6 – 6.8 kg) of food a day for its own needs (this amount factors in the metabolized water from the food for its own requirements). As the Hydrant is designed to generate water, they are given on average, 100 lbs (45 kg) on top of their daily nutritional needs to then generate water for the House.

Sleep Requirements: The Hydrant only needs to sleep four hours a day.

Rider: None as the Hydrant functions as livestock. However, the insect is large enough to be ridden when desired by Splicers wearing nothing heavier than a Living Body Armor. In fact, they have the nature of being like armored puppy dogs, and are ridden by the children for fun and used for light cargo hauling and transportation to nearby areas (i.e.: secret outpost, hidden surplus depots, and locations) within the Red Sands Haven Colony House and as necessary.

The Hydrant follows orders from all people of the House of Red Sands, but Geneticists, Outriders and Packmasters are regarded as Colony Leaders, and receive priority.

Other Data (for individual animals): I.Q. 1D4+2 (low animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+1, M.A. 1D4, P.S. 1D6+20 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D4+10, P.E. 2D4+12, and Spd. 55.

Number of Attacks: Three.

Combat Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +1 on initiative, +2 to strike in hand to hand combat, +2 to parry and +1 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact/fall, and +5 to save against Horror Factor.

Equivalent "Instinctual" Skills of Note: Climb 98%, Land Navigation 90%, understand the language of the House 60%, Prowl 45%, Swim 50%, Track by scent 70% (+20% to track scents of blood, meat, decay, sweet aromas and water), and Wilderness Survival 90%.

Combat Capabilities: The Hydrant is not bred for combat but can fight when necessary.

Nipping Bite: 1D4 M.D.

Full Strength Bite: 2D8 M.D.

Power Bite: 4D8, but counts as two melee attacks.

Restrained Head Butt: One S.D.C.

Full Strength Head Butt: 1D8 M.D.

Running Body Block/Ram: 2D6 M.D. and has a 50% chance of knocking an opponent up to 12 feet (3.6 m) tall off its feet and onto its back. If so, the target loses initiative and two melee attacks. A body block/ram counts as two attacks.

Hydrant Bio-Weapon Systems:

- 1. Bite Attack with Mandibles**: Nip: 1D4 M.D., Full Strength Bite: 2D8 M.D., or Power Bite: 4D8, but counts as two melee attacks.
- 2. Drencher**: The Hydrant has the ability to disgorge its water-filled abdomen to drench or knockdown (25% chance) and attack opponents up to 10 feet (3 m) tall. Damage is only 1D6 S.D.C. from the impact of the water and being knocked down when dropped directly on a person. The intent, however, is something much more sinister when several nearby Hydrants do this. The act of several clustered together dowsing the ground directly underneath and around the target creates a 10-15 foot (3 to 4.6 m) muddy pool of quicksand (see the Quicksand description under **Geography** for details). **Note**: Dowsing has a 65% chance of dowsing a fire that is not yet a raging inferno.

Nova Hawk War Mount

While the Molok and Desert Judge War Mounts patrol the desert's surface and below it, the Nova Hawk patrols the skies and searches for danger and food across the horizon. A scout and ambush predator, the Nova Hawk is a versatile war mount and valuable resource for the House of Red Sands. It can cover ground quickly for fast responses that require air support, aerial surveillance or emergency rescue and evacuation.

The Nova Hawk War Mount is an impressive, giant bird of prey, with two wings, a raptor's beak, and a sophisticated gyroscopic stabilizing system that enables the hawk to hover almost motionless at four feet (1.2 m) off the ground or high up in the sky with what appears to be amazing ease for superior control and stealth performance.

Like the Desert Judge, Nova Hawks are used to flying into non-desert environments where food is more plentiful and bring-

ing it back to feed Red Sanders, War Mounts and Host Armors of the House. Its fast flight capabilities enables the bird of prey and its rider to reach areas where game animals are more readily available, in and out of the desert. War Mount and Outrider usually hunt together, but sometimes they are able to hunt independently to catch more prey. When ample game has been hunted down, the Nova Hawk clutches any large prey in its talons while the Outrider slings smaller game over his shoulder or hangs it from his saddle, and they fly back to base/camp.

In combat, the bold Nova Hawk is willing to dive in with weapons blazing to blast enemy targets on the ground, or do fast fly-bys to strike with its powerful claws. In the latter case, the War Mount simply slashes at them with its talons as it zips by. However, if a Nova hawk seizes an opponent, it may also choose to snatch up one to two human/Splicer-sized targets and carry them high into the sky and drop them back to the ground, to allow them to plummet to their deaths.

Though Archangels are still the ultimate combat aces of aerial dog-fighting, the giant hawk and its Outrider can also engage in aerial combat and are capable of amazing aerial acrobatics, maneuvers and dog-fighting in their own right. The downside being that the War Mount is so specialized in the air that it is far from graceful on the ground where it is most vulnerable, as it must hobble along and hop about for mobility.

Class: Reconnaissance, Hunter and Aerial Attack War Mount.

M.D.C. by Location:

- ** Head – 160
- * Armored Telescopic Eyes (4) – 20 each
- War Saddle – 100
- Wings (2) – 180 each
- * Legs (2) – 120 each
- * Taloned Feet (2) – 70 each
- * Omni-Light Cells Weapons (2, chest) – 35 each
- * Organic Rocket Launchers (2, shoulders) – 50 each
- * Gyroscopic Stabilizing Thrusters (6) – 20 each
- *** Main Body – 360

* A single asterisk indicates a small, low profile, or shielded target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a “Called Shot” to hit such targets, and even then is -3 to strike.

** Destroying the head eliminates all optics and sensory systems, reduces the maximum speed and number of attacks by half and eliminates all combat bonuses from the War Mount. However, the rider can still fly and fire weapon systems for up to two hours after the head is gone.

*** Depleting the Main Body M.D.C. to zero (or less) destroys the War Mount.

Speed:

Running: 20 mph (32 km) maximum.

Leaping: 10 feet (3 m) high or across from a standing position without using the wings to actually take flight. A wing assisted leap can propel the Nova Hawk 30 feet (9 m) high, or 50 feet (15.2 m) across without actually attaining flight, and the giant bird can glide silently up to 4,000 feet (1,219 m) when it drops down from a high perch like a building or mountain peak.

Climbing: Not possible.

Digging: Not possible.

Swimming: Although it certainly prefers not to swim, the Nova Hawk can actually swim short distances (up to 1 mile/1.6 km) at 5 mph (8 km) due to its thick down feathers that keep it somewhat

afloat, as its powerful wings clumsily row it back to shore. However, they’ll drown if they’re too far from land. Fortunately, and contrary to popular belief, an eagle can take off from the surface of the water as long as it does not sit there too long and get its wings soaked.

Flying: Maximum speed is 400 mph (640 km), with a cruising speed of 120 mph (192 km). The Nova Hawk can reach speeds of 500 mph (800 km) but only for a short burst of 1D6 minutes, after which the hawk must slow down to cruising speed for the next 4D6 minutes. Its diving speed has been clocked at close to 600 mph (960 km).

The Nova Hawk can fly at cruising speed for up to 15 hours without fatigue, or when flying at maximum speed at intervals of two hours before needing to land and rest for an hour or glide on air currents for an hour at an altitude below 5,000 feet (1,524). Needs six hours of sleep per day.

Maximum Altitude: From a stationary hover four feet (1.2 m) off the ground up to 20,000 feet (6,096 m) above the ground.

Statistical Data:

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m) at the shoulders. 9 feet (2.7 m) to the top of the head.

Width: 4 feet (1.2 m) from shoulder to shoulder, 32 foot (9.8 m) wingspan.

Length: 8 feet (2.4 m) from chest to rump, with another five feet (1.5 m) of tail.

Weight: 1,200 to 1,600 pounds (540 to 720 kg).

Cargo: Up to 880 lbs (396 kg) on its back, or one ton of cargo carried via a flight harness, like a helicopter, but at half its usual speed and altitude.

The Nova Hawk can carry two additional personnel, one on the back behind the Outrider, and one clutched in its talons, but this makes diving attacks and high speed flying impossible. Moreover, unless those being carried in the talons are wearing Living Body Armor or Host Armor, the Nova Hawk cannot fly faster than 100 mph (160 km) without fear of hurting or dropping the passengers held in its talons. In fact, a speed of 75 mph (120 km) is safer.

Physical Strength: 1D6+22, Supernatural.

Production Cycle: 2 years gestation, plus a 4 year growth cycle.

Operational Lifetime: 60 years.

Trade Value: 10 million credits for a healthy, undamaged unit.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 4D6 M.D.C. per hour for the Main Body, and 2D6 M.D.C. per hour for all other locations.

Horror Factor: 10 against humans, none against the Machine.

Sensors & Features: Standard for War Mount, plus the Nova Hawk has Telescopic Vision, enabling the War Mount to see clearly up to two miles (3.2 km), Resistance to Heat, Stealth Field, Dry Muscle, Altered Physiology (for water retention); the bird can hover with exceptional balance via a sophisticated gyroscopic system that is linked to its Vestibular Apparatus in the skull, and with its two wings and six gyroscopic stabilizing thrusters, the War Mount can maintain a steady hovering position from four feet (1.2 m) off the ground, to its maximum altitude.

Feeding: The Nova Hawk is a Lithovore and requires 77-121 pounds (35 to 54.4 kg) of minerals a day.

Special Feeding Requirements: Organic Rocket Launchers.

Colors: It has sandy tan or orange colored feathers on its dorsal surface (back) and sky blue and white plumage on the ventral (belly) surface to preserve its stealthy aerial performances.

Sleep Requirements: Six hours.

Other Data (used when the War Mount is without a rider):

Alignment: Considered good. Friendly and protective of humans and Splicers. The Nova Hawk is an intelligent hunter that uses stealth, speed and raw power to overwhelm its prey. The War Mount responds to humans in a similar way as domesticated dogs, and cares about them. The hawk has an ingrained dislike for robots and machines, regards them as its natural enemy, and will try to protect humans from them even when the animal is not being directed to do so by an Outrider. Similar in intelligence and behavior to the Black Talon War Hawk, which is seen as the little brother/sister of the Nova Hawk. Both have a healthy respect towards each other.

War Mount Attributes: I.Q. 1D6 +6 (high animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+11, M.A. 1D6+9, P.S. 1D6+22 (Supernatural), P.P. 1D6 +17, P.E. 1D8 +20, P.B. 2D4 +8 (considered a majestic bird), Spd 110 for a cruising speed of 120 mph (192 km). See Flying Speed stat, above, for complete details.

Number of Attacks per Melee: Four.

Combat Bonuses (in addition to any possible attribute bonuses or enhancements): +3 on initiative, +2 strike with ranged weapons, +2 strike in hand to hand combat, +2 to parry, +3 to automatic dodge in the air, +3 roll with impact/fall, and is impervious to Horror Factor, disease and poison.

Equivalent "Instinctual" Skills of Note: Climb 40%, Land Navigation 90%, Prowl 75%, understand the language of the House 90%, and Wilderness Survival 90%.

Combat Capabilities: The Nova Hawk can engage in ranged or close quarter combat, or a combination of the two.

Nipping Bite: 1D4 M.D.

Bite at Full Strength: 2D6 M.D.

Restrained Talon Swipe: 1D8 M.D.

Talon Strike at Full Strength: 4D8 M.D.

Talon Double Claw Strike: 1D6x10 M.D.

Power Talon Dive, Double Claw Strike: 1D8x10+10 M.D., but counts as two attacks. A diving strike and has a 01-75% likelihood of knocking an opponent as large 15 feet (4.6 m) tall, off its feet and onto its back. If knocked off their feet, the victim loses initiative and two melee attacks/actions.

Nova Hawk Bio-Weapon Systems:

1. Nova Breath Cannon: The Librarians of the Red Sands were inspired by the Heat Projector Cannon and incendiary Plasma Breath Bio-Enhancements (see **Splicers® RPG**, pages 101 & 102) and wanted to create something similar for their avian squadrons. The Nova Hawk's lungs, throat, mouth and interior of the beak are made of the same DNA substance as the dark eye of a Heat Projector Cannon. This gives the resemblance of a black mamba when the Nova Hawk's beak is screeching or hissing. However, what comes next is a very bright, blinding blast of luminous white burning energy.

Mega-Damage: Two Settings; a Quick Burst 2D10 M.D., or a Charged Burst 1D6x10+10 M.D.

Duration: The Quick Burst dissipates immediately upon impact. However, if hit by the Charged Burst, the destabilized runaway energy hits and splashes around the target and continues to burn for 1D6 melee rounds (up to two minutes) and inflicts an additional 2D6 M.D. per round to a 10 foot (3 m) radius of the impact.

Maximum Effective Range: 2,200 feet (671 m).

Rate of Fire: The Quick Burst counts as one melee attack/action, while a Charged Burst counts as two melee attacks/actions.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Bonus: +4 to strike, but this is the only bonus that counts to strike for a Nova Breath attack.

Bio-E Cost: 30 Bio-E points.

Prerequisite: Heat Resistance and Fire Breath.

Penalties: In a desert on a hot, sunny day, the luminous weapon works amazingly well, but at night, in the dark or underwater, its discharge gives away the War Mount's location and can attract more enemies, particularly machines if its uses are not wisely spaced.

Also, when charging the breath weapon, the Nova Hawk can not open its mouth to bite, pick up or carry anything, as its beak must be shut during the charging phase. If the beak is opened prematurely, the charge dissipates immediately.

2. Omni Light Cell Blasters (2): Located in the chest are a pair of Omni-Upgraded Super Light Cells that fire laser-like beams to blast enemies and engage in aerial combat. This battery of energy weapons is often used to shoot down enemies that the Nova Hawk flies over.

Primary Purpose: Long-Range Assault and Bombardment.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: There are two settings, 1D10 M.D., usually used as a warning shot and 2D10 M.D. for a heavy blast. May be fired one at a time or as simultaneous dual blasts at the same target. 2D10 M.D. for a pair of simultaneous warning blasts or 4D10 M.D. for a simultaneous pair of heavy blasts.

Rate of Fire: Each single or simultaneous dual blast counts as one melee attack.

Range: 3,600 feet (1,097 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

3. Organic Rocket Launchers (2): Located on each side of the hawk, in the shoulders between the neck and the wings, is an Organic Rocket Launcher. This weapon is used for air-to-air and air-to-ground attacks.

Primary Purpose: Long-Range Assault and Dogfights.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Robot and Anti-Fortifications

Mega-Damage: 5D10 M.D. per Organic Rocket fired, with a blast radius of 10 feet (3 m).

Range: One mile (1.6 km).

Rate of Fire: Commonly, one at a time, but can be fired in volleys of 2 or 4 at a time. Each attack, whether one rocket or a volley of 2-4, counts as one melee attack.

Payload: 8 total. The Nova Hawk has four rockets for each launcher. It takes the Nova Hawk four hours to grow back one Organic Rocket (32 hours for all eight).

4. Taloned Feet: Like all birds of prey, the Nova Hawk has powerful taloned feet to pierce flesh and crush bone.

Primary Purpose: Hunting and Carrying Prey.

Secondary Purpose: Combat and Defense.

Mega-Damage: See Combat Capabilities, above, for full details. Talon Strike: 4D8 M.D.

Talon Double Claw Strike: 1D6x10 M.D.

Power Talon Dive, Double Claw Strike: 2D6x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

5. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use long-range weapons, the rider or riderless animal can engage in physical hand combat using its talons, or biting with its beak.

The rider may also use any handheld weapons or Host Armor weapon in his possession while riding the War Mount, but each of his attacks counts as one of the combined melee

attacks. However, as long as the rider and War Mount remain connected, their bonuses are combined as applicable to the specific type of weapon attack (i.e. combined hand to hand bonuses apply to all close combat, gun bonuses apply to lasers and ranged weapons, etc.).

War Ants

War Ants are Bio-Engineered creatures that help serve to protect, defend and to disguise the trails and effects caused by Hydrants and Red Sanders. They are deployed alongside Hydrants and are imprinted immediately on the swarms they are exposed to as creatures that must be protected, even if it costs the War Ant its life. For every 10 Hydrants there will be at least 3 Butchy Boys, 1D4+2 Erasers (Faeries) Ants and 2 Scarabick Soldier Ants traveling with the Hydrant swarm.

Butchy Boys or Roly Polies – These armored insects are based off of the armadillo-like pill bug insects that can curl up into tight, armored balls. Butchy Boys are designed to roll up in the face of a threat and then roll around and protect the hydrant swarms or the Colonial Shepherds and fellow Colony mates. They are able to travel by using multiple vent-styled thrusters between the sections of their ringed armored shell that push the insects along and can propel them at high speeds. The oversized pill bugs are able to navigate and see with a pair of small armored eyes located on each of the armored rings that make up the outer shell.

Butchy Boys get their name because they are the lookouts and perimeter defense for the Hydrant swarm. When danger is detected, their shells generate a humming Bio-Force Field that notifies all the nearby Hydrants and other Red Sands Colonists that danger has been detected. The Hydrants are then corralled into a tight bundle, with the individuals that have the most filled abdomens in the center of the group, while the weakest and injured are placed at the perimeter of the pile as sacrificial fodder to protect the larger gathered resources. The group moves towards any available protection or begin to excavate an escape route. While the Hydrants are doing this, the defending Butchy Boys will increase their velocity with their Bio-Force Fields activated, circling at high speeds around the swarm until they resemble a living circular barrier designed to deflect incoming attacks and smashing full speed into any invaders that try to approach the encircled swarm.

Butchy Boys are also used when not in combat to roll over tracks and help cover up traces of Red Sanders, and make it easier for the fast flying Eraser Ants to finish the job.

Class: Bio-Engineered Defender Insects.

Crew: None. The Butchy Boy is too small to be ridden.

M.D.C. by Location:

- Thruster Vent Ports (6) – 35 each
- Thruster Vents (6) – 80 each
- * Armored Eyes (14) – 10 each
- Antennae (2) – 5 each
- ** Armored Crested Head – 140
- Mandibles – 5 each
- Bio-Force Field – 165
- *** Cuticle Exoskeleton Thorax Plates (7) – 80 each
- *** Pleon Ventral Abdomen (Main Body) – 25
- * Legs (14) – 30 each

* A single asterisk indicates a small, low profile, or shielded target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a “Called Shot” to hit such targets, and even then is -3 to strike.

** Destroying the head eliminates all optics and sensory systems, reduces the maximum speed and number of attacks by half and eliminates all combat bonuses.

*** Depleting the Main Body of the Thorax (M.D.C. reduced to zero or less) kills the Butchy Boy. Depleting the Main Body of the Abdomen mortally wounds the creature and it dies in less than 30 minutes. Until then, reduce speed and the number of attacks and bonuses by half; round down.

Speed:

Running: 20 mph (32 km), though it typically uses rolling as its primary form of mobility.

Rolling: With its thrusters, the Butchy Boy can roll like a fast ball and is able to reach speeds up to 120 mph (192 km), though cruise is typically 35-80 mph (56 to 128 km) to keep up with the Hydrant Swarm.

Leaping: Butchy Boys’ legs are not able to give them any springing capability, but the vents can propel a balled Butchy Boy 20 feet (6.1) high and 40 feet (12.2 m) across from a standing still position.

Climbing: 10 mph (16 km).

Digging: 10 mph (16 km) through sand and dirt, half that through rock and concrete.

Swimming: Will sink immediately to the bottom of any body of water. Though with its thrusters activated and balled up, it can move half its air speed and sustain depths of 800 feet (243.8 m), but they must come up for air every 1D8+10 minutes.

Flying: With its thrusters, the Butchy Boy can reach speeds up to 200 mph (320 km), though only reach a height of 20 feet (6.1 m) in altitude.

Statistical Data:

Height: 3 feet (0.9 m) tall.

Length: 6 feet (1.8 m) long extended, 3.5 feet (1 m) when tucked into a ball.

Width: 3 feet (0.9 m) shoulder to shoulder.

Weight: 350-400 pounds (157.5 to 180 kg).

Cargo: Despite its durable shell, the Butchy Boy’s legs weren’t built to be strong so they are not able to haul heavy loads of cargo. The most that can be carried is 200 pounds (90 kg), and 300 pounds (135 kg) pulled.

Physical Strength: 1D6+10.

Production Cycle: 3 months gestation, and 8 months growth time.

Operational Lifetime: 10 years. This is due to the toll it takes on the animal to constantly fight and protect the swarm.

Trade Value: 70,000-110,000 credits for one healthy, undamaged giant insect. Due to their importance to the survival of the House of Red Sands, they are not for sale and defended with utmost savagery.

Bio-Regeneration: 2D6 per hour for the main body, 1D6 per hour for all other regions.

Horror Factor: 8 for humans, 6 for Splicers. +2 when the Bio-Force Field is activated and +4 when three or more begin smashing into things. None against machines.

Senses & Feature: Standard, plus Antennae, Bio-Force Field, Resistance to Physical Attacks and Dry Muscle.

Feeding: Butchy Boys are Parasitic and consume 5-10 pounds (2.2 to 4.5 kg) of decay and waste produced by Hydrants and

other life forms, per day. They are particularly fond of the molted exoskeletons produced by hydrants and shedding skin of Desert Judges. They will eat small bits of decay, fruit and human refuse as well, and will nibble off of any exposed hair, or dead skin cells when they get a chance. This makes them annoying to be around when the pilots must exit or clean their Living Body Armor/ Host Armor. Herbivore and Lithovore War Mounts tolerate their cleaning while Carnivores and Omnivores get extremely agitated by their nibbling. Be warned, any other War Mount equipped with the Parasitic metabolism will not tolerate the presence of Butchy Boys as they will be viewed as direct competition for food and will seek to drive the pill bugs away. Butchy Balls typically react by balling up while being knocked about by the enraged rival War Mount and waiting it out, returning later to nibble on anything they can find.

Sleep Requirements: As a parasitic organism, the Butchy Boy does not require sleep or rest, making them excellent protectors and guards.

Rider: None. Though children love trying to hop aboard them and hanging on as a form of haven entertainment.

Color: Copper.

Other Data (for Individual animals): I.Q. 1D4+2 (low animal intelligence), M.E. 1D4+6, M.A. 1D4, P.S. 1D6+10, P.P. 1D6+10, P.E. 2D6+20, and Spd. 120 mph (193 km), see Speed stat block, above, for details.

Number of Attacks: Three (includes the Parasitic Metabolism attack Bonus).

Combat Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +2 Attacks per melee round, +3 on initiative (+4 when in flight), +3 to strike in hand to hand combat, +1 to parry and +3 to dodge and +8 to roll with punch, impact and fall.

Equivalent "Instinctual" Skills of Note: Escape Artist 55%, Land Navigation 60%, understand the language of the House 60%, Camouflage 50%, Swim 55%, Track by scent 65% (+20% to track scents of blood, hair, dead skin or shedding, sweat, waste(feces/urine), decay, and water, and Wilderness Survival 70%.

Combat Capabilities: Butchy Boys were bred to be alert defenders with a knack for ramming into opponents at high velocity speeds with their Bio-Force Fields activated for maximum damage or to deflect attacks directed at their comrades. They are equipped with very little else to engage into combat.

Nipping Bite: 1D4 S.D.C.

Full Strength Bite: 1D6 M.D.C.

Restrained Head Butt: One S.D.C.

Full Strength Head Butt: 1D8 M.D.

Rolling Body Block/Ram: 4D6+4 M.D. and has a 65% likelihood of knocking an opponent up to 12 feet (3.6 m) tall off its feet and onto its face or back. If so, the target loses initiative and two melee attacks, and the ant is poised for a Smashing Grinder attack (+2 to strike for the Ant's next attack). This is based on the Butchy Boy rolling at its full speed, otherwise every 20 mph (32 km) causes 1D4 M.D points of damage to the impacted target. Having the Bio-Force Field activated protects the Butchy Boy, but does not cause any additional damage to the target. A body block/ram counts as one attack.

Flying Body Block/Ram Attack: 1D4x10 M.D.+8 and has an 80% likelihood of knocking an opponent up to 15 feet (4.6 m) tall off its feet and onto its back. If so, the target loses initiative and two melee attacks, and the ant is poised for a Smashing Grinder

attack (+2 to strike for the Ant's next attack). This is based on the Butchy Boy flying at its full speed, otherwise every 20 mph (32 km) causes 1D4 M.D points of damage to the target. Having the Bio-Force Field activated protects the Butchy Boy, but does not cause any additional damage to the target. A body block/ram counts as one attack.

Smashing Grinder (Special Attack): If a Butchy Boy is able to knock an opponent down or pin them against something like a large boulder, wall, War Mount or the ground, it can opt to lower its Bio-Force Field and spin in place (at super high velocity) and grind against their pinned opponents using its armored shell, causing 2D4x10 M.D. This high-speed grinding causes the target to lose initiative and one melee attack. Worse, it delivers costly damage by sheering off pieces of appendages, spikes, spines, spurs/bone blades, antennae, and can splinter cannons, etc., that are facing directly into the spinning Butchy Boy. Biotech weapons, sensors and appendages will have to heal properly before being able to function. Mechanical weapons and equipment will have to be repaired or replaced.

Trying to grab it while it is spinning does 4D6 M.D. per every attempt to hold or hit it. The Smashing Grinder cannot be grabbed or held. Victims can dig out from under it or have teammates knock it off or destroy it. If equipped with a Bio-Force Field, Splicers can have it instantly deflected. Robots or Technojackers equipped with Force field generators can also deflect this attack. The grinder counts as two attacks, but can only be implemented against a grounded or pinned opponent. **Note:** More than one Butchy Boy can apply this attack against large-sized targets like War Mounts and large robots.

Eraser Ants

Eraser Ants are the flying scouts and serve as the ultimate cover-uppers for the Red Sands existence. They are equipped with an array of biosensors and were designed to resemble small, sexy looking faeries. Despite some wasp-like features with paired wings and compound eyes, everything is eerily, and aesthetically pleasing to most human eyes. The Librarian Rema knew that such an insect had to be accepted among the Red Sand Splicers as the tracks of the inhabitants needed to be covered up no matter how slight. Insects that were too big or menacing would scare off or unnerve most people, regardless of how beneficial the insect would be to them. Rema thought of the ladybug. It is a beetle, but most humans adored or favored it, while a beetle or harmless fly of the same size that looked totally different would easily be killed or fanned away with disgust.

Even more convincing was the visual comparison between rabbits, gerbils versus rats; before the release of the dreaded Rat-bombs (see **Splicers® RPG**, page 35). A rabbit or gerbil was "cute" and innocent while an animal the same size and belonging to the same rodent family like a rat or mouse was considered vermin and killed on sight. It was clear that aesthetics played a significant role on the human psyche and tolerance. The Eraser had to not only be tolerated, but accepted and hopefully, adored if the Red Sands was going to remain a hidden society. Swarm Lords, Xerics and War Mounts are expected to be frightening war creatures, but Rema's precious Erasers had to be deployed among the militia, the populace's living quarters throughout the haven and other Red Sands locations.

So the development of a human-looking faerie insect covered in beautiful colored patterns with a whimsical appearance that children could even play with and safely keep as pets was devised. Erasers are small insect-like humanoids with two pair of dragonfly-like wings and four arms, with their lower half bodies ending in a curvaceous, wasp-like abdomen. They buzz about (particularly around marching Hydrant swarms and brigades), sweeping and covering up their tracks with their speedy pawed hands that move at the speed of a Hummingbird's wings. Other Red Sander footprints, tracks and various signs left behind are also covered up or quickly buried by the speedy critters. They are able to discern trails by seeing the chemical signatures generated by Red Sand Biotechnology.

Despite their appealing aesthetics and human-like facial features (big, sexy eyes and little cute lips, no nose), they are indeed, insect creatures, but are also the smartest of the Bio-Engineered insect species. They will go to great lengths to cover up trails, footprints and other signs that could be detected and tracked by enemies. They will also sabotage and contaminate rival Splicer biotechnology with acidic paste or steal and hide any loose items, weapons or equipment. They will dart in and out, touching, pushing and tampering with non-biotech objects, even metal objects; dodging the nanobot plague reactions as if they are playing a deadly game of tag.

They are nicknamed "Faeries" by the field militia and have been made into celebrated heroes and characters that have numerous tales and myths being spoken by the haven Storytellers. All the children have heard the nursery rhyme of, "*We thank you for the tiny speedy hands, they belong to our little heroes that preserve our stand. They help hide and protect us all, from the machines and dangers that cause everyone else to fall.*"

Not only was the Eraser a success and massively produced, it also garnered tremendous amounts of trust and acceptance by the House's denizens for future biotechnology created by the Librarians. Swarms of Erasers were released into the Icarus Desert and hives and nest sites were installed along its outskirts, just beyond the Red Sands' territorial borders. All of the Red Sands' secret tunnels, outposts, caves, underground passageways and networks are filled with them. Every checkpoint, entrance and major shelter has several Eraser nest sites.

Rather this is wise or not, or was a devious, calculated step by Librarian Rema to create a network of spy drones that she can tap into and have at her disposal remains to be seen. For such a militarized House teaming with Biotech and so enraged at both the Resistance and the Machine; they didn't seem to be concerned about their House Librarians going megalomaniac in such an isolated land. The Ustaada Dreadguard Council and the Field operatives cannot deny the efficiency of how well their tracks have been hidden, and have supported most of the Librarians' major decisions, thus far.

Class: Bio-Engineered Scout, Anti-Detection and Covert Drone.

Crew: None. Way too small to be ridden.

M.D.C. by Location: (despite being small, it is a Mega-Damage insect.)

- * Wings (2) – 10 S.D.C. each
- * Arms (4) – 1 each
- * Pawed Hands (4) – 2 each
- * Legs (2) – 2 each
- * Pawed Feet (2) – 1 each
- * Long Antennae (4) – 1 each

* Forehead Antennae (2) – 10 S.D.C. each

** Head – 3

*** Main Body (Upper): Thorax – 2

*** Main Body (Lower): Abdomen – 5

* Every single part of this tiny, a fast-moving creature is a small, low profile target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a "Called Shot" to hit such targets, and even then is -4 to strike.

** Destroying the head automatically kills the creature.

*** Depleting the Main Body of the Thorax (M.D.C. reduced to zero or less) kills the Eraser. Depleting the Main Body of the Abdomen mortally wounds the creature and it dies in less than 5 minutes. Until then, reduce speed and the number of attacks and bonuses by half; round down. With the Abdomen destroyed, it continues to suffer 1 M.D.C. damage every minute, cannot regenerate damage, and will die.

Speed:

Running: Majority of the time, Erasers are flying, and only in rare occasions like heavy winds, dust storms or the extremely rare rain precipitations will they skitter about. They do not run on their hind legs; they run on all six limbs, and that is when they really remind oneself that they are true insects. They can reach 20 mph (32 km) but require rest for 1D4 minutes every 6 miles (9.6 km). **Leaping:** 6 feet (1.8 m) high and double across using all six limbs. **Climbing:** 20 mph (32 km) and can climb and stick to vertical surfaces, walls and ceilings and not reduce its speed. Smooth surfaces reduce the speed to half.

Digging: 5 mph (8 km) through sand and dirt, triple through rock and concrete.

Swimming: Can dog paddle at 5 mph (8 km) for 1D4 minutes, but can not stay submerged underwater for longer than 1 minute or it will drown.

Flying: 70 mph (112 km) at full burst, but normally travel around 35-55 mph (56-88 km), and can clean a 6 foot (1.8 m) radius at the amazing speed of 20-35 mph.

Note: Most seasoned desert travelers (such as the Hydrants and Red Sanders) travel in single file in order to disguise their numbers and helps avoid sand traps and quicksand. So the Erasers usually don't have to cover wide paths.

Statistical Data:

Height: 1-2 feet (0.3 to 0.6 m) tall.

Diameter: 5 inch (12.7 cm) diameter around the hips of the lower abdomen.

Width: 4.5 inches (11.4 cm) shoulder to shoulder, with a 4 foot (1.2 m) wingspan.

Weight: 3-4 pounds (1.4 to 1.8 kg).

Cargo: Erasers are rarely given anything to carry as they are designed to have their hands free, but if ordered by a Colonial Shepherd to carry a small object, retrieve or steal something small, they can carry up to 7 pounds (3.2 kg) up to one mile (1.6 km) away at 10 mph (16 km) no higher than 10 feet (3 m), before being overexerted and dropping it.

Physical Strength: 1D4+6.

Production Cycle: 1.5 months gestation, and 2 months growth time.

Operational Lifetime: 5 years.

Trade Value: 30,000-135,000 credits for one healthy, undamaged giant insect, though each child born into the House of Red Sands is automatically gifted a Faerie hatchling to care

for after its gestation period from the Gene-Pool. Once it reaches maturity, the child can opt to keep it as a pet or release it into the world so that it can nobly serve its House. Children are often told the nursery rhyme above to encourage the latter choice. Due to their importance to the survival of the House of Red Sands, they are not for sale and defended with utmost savagery.

Bio-Regeneration: 1D4 per hour for the head or main body, one M.D.C per hour for all other regions.

Horror/Awe Factor: 9 for humans, 7 for Splicers. 12 for a group of 5 or more. None against machines.

Senses & Feature: Standard, plus Advanced, Armored Compound Eyes, Antennae, Motion Detection, and Righting Reflex.

Special Vulnerabilities: Vulnerable to Radiation, Poisonous fumes and Pesticides, and will die within 1D6 minutes if exposed.

Feeding: Lithovore metabolism and must feed on half of one pound (0.22 kg) of minerals (stones, rocks, dirt, clay, etc.) per day.

Sleep Requirements: Erasers require 3D4 hours of sleep/rest/inactivity per day.

Rider: None.

Color: Range from beautiful butterfly-like color patterns to various exotic insect colors and patterns. No two Erasers are colored the same.

Other Data (for Individual animals): I.Q. 1D6+2 (medium animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+6, M.A. 1D8, P.S. 1D4+6, P.P. 3D6+10, P.E. 2D6+5, P.B. 4D6+5 (Minimum of 16) and Spd. 70 mph (128.7 km), see Speed stat block, above, for details.

Number of Attacks: Three.

Combat Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +1 attack per melee, +4 to Automatic Dodge (+1 to dodge for every 20 mph (32 km) when flying), +3 on initiative, +2 to strike in hand to hand combat, +1 to parry and +2 to roll with impact/fall.

Equivalent "Instinctual" Skills of Note: Climb 65%, Land Navigation 95%, understand the language of the House 70%, Prowl 75%, Track by sight 85%, Track by scent 75% (+20% to track Red Sands Biotechnology scents and water or blood), Surveillance 60% and Wilderness Survival 60%.

Combat Capabilities: The Eraser was bred specifically for scouting and concealing signs of the Red Sands' existence and is not ideal for close quarter combat.

Nipping Bite: 1D4 S.D.C.

Full Strength Bite: 1D8 S.D.C.

Scarabick Soldier Ant

Resembling a much smaller, but more agile Hydrant Ant and a tick on steroids, the Scarabick Soldier Ant is a vampiric insect that feeds on the vital fluids of its prey. Its huge head is armed with super-sized, gut-crushing mandibles and are powered by the massive musculature built into the head, jaws and neck, giving the Soldier Ant a bulldogish appearance. It also has several rows of condensed quills held firmly down in overlapping layers. When agitated and commanded by their Colonial Shepherd, these quills will instantly erect like the hairs of an excited wild boar and launch into the general direction instructed by the Shepherd. Without a Shepherd's direct command, the quills can not launch but they can stand upright and serve as a great defense in melee combat against enemies.

The Scarabick's exoskeleton appears as numerous ringed formations and its abdomen ends in a wicked, scorpion-like segmented tail with a large, bulbous stinger at the tip. The difference being that instead of injecting a poisonous venom when the stinger pierces its victims, it acts more like a vacuuming hypodermic needle that rapidly sucks and extracts blood, water and other fluids from living adversaries. Each segment of the tail can be its own half a gallon (1.91 liter) container, allowing the Scarabick to store up to 4 gallons (15 liters) of fluid that it can give to Hydrants for the conversion to purified water.

Scarabicks have powerful mandibles for seizing, ripping into opponents, and dragging heavy things like wounded armored comrades, fallen enemies or prey for the colony. The Soldier ants utilize strategic coordination so that these elite-caliber killers can sweep in and destroy adversaries, but only after expendable Hydrants have rendered the enemy helpless. In a move that's also known as the death blow, Scarabicks eventually advance from behind the front lines and take out their adversaries by chomping down and draining them.

These vampire ants will stab into any live prey or carcass (with fluid in it) that they find as long as it is within 100 feet (30.5 m) of the Hydrant swarm that they are protecting.

Each Scarabick can drink up to a pint of blood (473 ml) in one minute, and will gorge until its tail is either full, is driven away or killed. When full, the bug's distended tail prevents it from running at full speed (reduce to half as the insect must drag its tail along the ground to crawl away or back to a depot or Hydrant where it can inject its stinger into the Hydrant's port atop of its back and unload its blood bank into a Hydrant's Abdomen).

Note: The blood the soldier drinks provides water and nourishment for the Scarabick and the Colony, so it will protect such reservoirs and the swarm first before engaging in battle, unless commanded otherwise by a Shepherd.

Class: Bioengineered Combatant, Hydrant Herder and Sentry.

Crew: None. The Scarabick is too small to be ridden.

M.D.C. by Location:

** Head – 110

* Eyes (2) – 15 each

Mandibles – 65 per pincer

*** Main Body (Upper): Thorax – 180

*** Main Body (Lower): Abdomen – 120

* Legs (6) – 125 each

* A single asterisk indicates a small, low profile, or shielded target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a "Called Shot" to hit such targets, and even then is -3 to strike.

** Destroying the head eliminates all optics and sensory systems, reduces the maximum speed and number of attacks by half and eliminates all combat bonuses. The creature lives for 1D4 hours after the head is gone.

*** Depleting the Main Body of the Thorax (M.D.C. reduced to zero or less) kills the Scarabick. Depleting the Main Body of the Abdomen mortally wounds the creature and it dies in less than 30 minutes. Until then, reduce speed and the number of attacks and bonuses by half; round down. With the Abdomen destroyed, it continues to suffer 10 M.D.C. damage every minute, cannot regenerate damage, and will die.

Speed:

Running: 70 mph (112 km) empty, but are able to put on a burst of speed of 100 mph (160 km) that lasts 1D6 melees, after which

the Scarabick must drop down to cruising speed for 10 minutes. 55 mph (88 km) half full and reduce speed to only 20 mph (32 km) when the tail is full/near full.

Leaping: Unlike Hydrants, the Scarabick is capable of leaping up to 20 feet (6.1 m high and across with a running start) and tends to leap up on and run atop of Hydrant swarms to see or reach targets or herd the swarm, much like a herding dog does a flock of sheep.

Climbing: The Scarabick is a muscle packed powerhouse and can scale a 90 degree cliff face upwards or downwards at half their normal speed. They can also climb and cling onto the sides of walls and walk along ceilings at full speed. Reduce speed by half when climbing smooth surfaces and cannot hang upside down on smooth surfaces for more than 5 minutes.

Digging: The powerful pair of front limbs enables the soldier ant to dig 30 mph (48 km) through sand and dirt, half that through rock and concrete, and only 2 mph (3.2 km) when the tail is half full or greater.

Swimming: Unlike Hydrants which can paddle or float temporarily, Scarabick Soldiers are solid muscle and heavy exoskeleton, and will sink immediately to the bottom of any body of water. They can not swim and will easily drown. Fortunately, they are designed to be small and strong enough that they can ride along the backs of Hydrants to reach the shore.

Flying: Not possible and cannot be enhanced with any Organic Thrusters or Wing Packs as the ants can not see clearly at such speeds.

Statistical Data:

Height: 2.5-3 feet (0.7 to 0.9 m) tall.

Length: 5 feet (1.5 m), but expands to 11 feet (3.3 m) total when the 6 foot (1.8 m) tail is fully extended.

Width: 3 feet (0.9 m) shoulder to shoulder.

Weight: 380-420 pounds (171-189 kg) normal, but can vary depending on how much blood and other fluids are contained in the tail tanks (maximum is 30 gallons/113.5 liters, equaling an additional 250 pounds/112.5 kg). **Note:** Each Tail segment is its own separate tank. If one tank is damaged the others have valves that seal to prevent any loss of contents.

Cargo: A Soldier Ant is a powerhouse and can carry up to 1,500 pounds (675 kg) on its back, or drag two tons on a wheeled flat-bed or wagon. Can only pull half of these weights if the tail is full.

Physical Strength: Supernatural 2D6+20.

Production Cycle: 3 months gestation, and 8 months growth time.

Operational Lifetime: 8 years. This is due to the toll it takes on the animal to constantly fight and protect the colony.

Trade Value: 90,000-135,000 credits for one healthy, undamaged giant insect. Due to their importance to the survival of the House of Red Sands, they are not for sale and defended with utmost savagery.

Bio-Regeneration: 2D6 per hour for the main body, 1D6 per hour for all other regions.

Horror Factor: 12 for humans, 10 for Splicers. 14 for a group of 5 or more. None against machines.

Senses & Feature: Standard, plus, Antennae, Biting Mandibles, Dry Muscle and Righting Reflex.

Feeding: Scarabick Soldiers have Vampiric metabolisms and must feed on the equivalent of at least 30 Hit Points (about 3 to 5 pints/1.42 to 2.36 liters) of blood per day, and failure to do so brings on weakness and starvation. Scarabicks will siphon little bits of blood from its swarm mates if it needs to in order to survive until it finds a fresh target.

Note: The smell or sight of blood makes the Soldier Ants tense, anxious and aggressive, and in combat, will drive the ants into the bloodletting frenzy that most vampiric creatures experience (+2 on initiative and +1 to strike, but cannot easily stop fighting and will attack anyone around it indiscriminately and roll to save vs insanity of 9 is required to stop the bloodletting. Hydrants, Butchy Boys and Erasers steer away and try to avoid frenzied Scarabick Soldiers. Colonial Shepherd's Living Body Armor exudes pheromones that make the ant wrangler chemically invisible to a frenzied Soldier Ant until he regains full control of it.

Sleep Requirements: The Scarabick Soldier Ant is vampiric and does not *require* sleep, but must rest 2D4x10 minutes after feeding, during which time the armor Ant is sluggish; reduce attacks per melee round by -2, Spd and all combat bonuses by 25%.

Rider: None.

Color: Midnight metallic green.

Other Data (for Individual animals): I.Q. 1D6+2 (low animal intelligence), M.E. 1D4+6, M.A. 1D4, P.S. 2D4+28 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D4+10, P.E. 2D4+12, and Spd. 66, about 40 mph (64 km), see Speed stat block, above, for details.

Number of Attacks: Four.

Combat Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +2 on initiative, +2 to strike in hand to hand combat, +2 to parry and +1 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact/fall. +5 to save against Horror Factor.

Equivalent "Instinctual" Skills of Note: Climb 98%, Land Navigation 90%, understand the language of the House 60%, Prowl 45%, Swim 50%, Track by scent 70% (+20% to track scents of blood, meat, decay, sweet aromas and water), and Wilderness Survival 90%.

Combat Capabilities: The Scarabick was bred specifically for combat and eagerly confronts perceived threats to its Colonial Shepherd, Hydrant swarm or fellow Colony members.

Nipping Bite: 1D4 M.D.

Full Strength Bite: 4D8 M.D.

Power Bite: 6D8+5 M.D., but counts as two melee attacks.

Restrained Head Butt: One S.D.C.

Full Strength Head Butt: 1D8 M.D.

Running Body Block/Ram 2D6 M.D. and has a 65% likelihood of knocking an opponent up to 12 feet (3.6 m) tall off its feet and onto its back. If so, the target loses initiative and two melee attacks, and the Soldier ant is poised for a fast bite attack (+2 to strike for the Ant's next attack). A body block/ram counts as two attacks.

Scarabick Soldier Ant Bio-Weapon Systems:

1. Bite Attack with Mandibles: These immense pincers are powered by an enormous musculature that delivers a stubborn vice grip and devastating bite force. They are used to seize formidable adversaries and drag them under the sand or to subdue them and hold them while the other ants and Red Sands soldiers deliver attacks. If no Red Sands soldier is around then the Scarabick will continue the assault and seek to dismember its opponent and drain it for resources. The powerful pincers can also serve as a jaws of life during search and rescue missions where victims are trapped inside their Host Armor or War Mounts or under heavy fallen debris. Requires a Splicers P.S. Strength of 34 or more to pry the jaws off.

M.D.C of each mandible: 65 M.D. each.

Primary Purpose: Assault and securing prey.

Secondary Purpose: Towing heavy items and Jaws of Life.

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 M.D.

2. Stinger Tail: The Ant's segmented tail ends in a stinger. Instead of injecting its victims with a venomous attack, the stinger works more like a hypodermic needle that drains its victims like a vampire.

Primary Purpose: Supply Gathering.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: The initial stab of the stinger does 2D6 M.D., but do not add the Scarabick's P.S. damage to the stinger tail. The vampiric effect will not work against Living Body Armors, Host Armors or War Mounts, nor was it designed to. These Biotech units have very little vital fluids that can be drained or converted for human use and become more like toxic sludge when drained than any useful resource. However, the human warriors inside these armors are a different story as they and other natural living creatures/alien predators are the real targets of the stingers.

Vampiric Blood Draining: On the initial draining attack, the pierce causes 1D8 S.D.C. to the pilot's human flesh. The true blood drinking is the true danger from this insect. If it is piercing human flesh (very difficult when the target is clad in thick armor), the suction will immediately begin draining one full pint (0.47 liters) of blood for the first melee round and a half a pint (0.23 liters) per melee round after.

For a Host Armor or War Mount to really start feeling the effects, there would need to be 10 or 30 Scarabick feeding on it, or waves of the insects attacking, drinking and dropping off as a new wave arrive to feed every few minutes. Even then it would take 2D6+8 minutes before the Host Armor or War Mount started to feel weak and sluggish enough from the blood loss to start causing negative effects (reduce Spd, -2 melee attacks/actions and all bonuses by half).

This is because the Host Armor or War Mount's natural bio-regeneration is also replenishing its lost blood at a significant rate. Thus it takes 10-30 of the ants to really overwhelm large Biotech creations such as Host Armor and War Mounts (especially designs like the Behemoth or Dracos).

However, given enough Scarabick numbers and time, a Host Armor or War Mount could be drained. Being drained so low could also result in the death of a Host Armor or War Mount as the result of being weakened and made vulnerable due to the reduced speed and fighting capabilities. That is why large swarm numbers, especially a super swarm of converging Scarabick, should be carefully assessed and avoided if possible as they are always protected by the ravenous soldiers.

Encountering these insects in the wild is always a serious danger. Thankfully, in the desert they seldom gather in swarms larger than 3D6 and are often bonded to a Hydrant swarm and will not stray too far (1,000 feet/305 m) from the swarm they are protecting.

Stinger Tail Bonuses: +4 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to disarm, and +4 to pull punch/tail strike (do not add any other bonuses).

Note 1: Same Bio-E cost and prerequisite as Stinger Tail (see *Splicers® RPG*, pages 94-95).

Note 2: The average human adult has 8-10 pints (3.8 to 4.7 liters) of blood; children 5-7 (2.4 to 3.3 liters). Losing three or more pints of blood is life threatening and leaves the victim in a temporary weakened state. Note that a Scarabick draining sting is not like a knife wound that inflicts severe damage to the body and

internal organs. The deep sting is more like a medical suctioning device used by surgeons to rapidly drain blood from operative sites during surgery. The bulbous head at the end of the tail contains the stinger's sharp end with several openings that are constantly making a sucking air noise. The stinger is designed to allow effective suction without significantly damaging surrounding tissue. The goal is to get the fluids and blood, not clog potential liquid scores with clotty tissues and muscle. The real damage from being drained is the loss of the blood.

Blood Loss Table:

Losing one pint (or 10-12.5% for Host Armor, War Mount or Biotic) of blood: Causes no ill effect, damage or impairment for most people other than a momentary lightheadedness. The body replaces the lost pint of blood in 2-3 weeks. A person can safely donate/lose one pint of blood every month.

Losing 2-3 pints (or 20-37.5% for Host Armor, War Mount or Biotic) of blood is the reasonable limit before a person experiences serious negative effects. Losing two pints (0.94 liters) makes the person feel tired, run-down, a bit anemic and more susceptible to disease (see penalties below). It takes 5-8 weeks for the human body to replace the lost blood. There's a 01-20% chance that a victim of a sting that drains him of 2-3 pints of blood passes out for 4D6 minutes. After awakening, the person feels a bit dizzy, sluggish and tires quickly. This run-down sensation lasts for 1D4+4 days with the following penalties: Penalties: -2 on initiative, -1 attack per melee, -1 to strike and parry, skill performance is -10%, and reduce Spd by 10%.

Receiving a transfusion of two pints of blood brings the character back to feeling okay, but a blood transfusion takes 1D4+1 hours, unless restored by a Saint/Engineer via Healing Touch and Increased Healing (see Note #3, below).

The equivalent of 15 Hit Points of healing is needed to restore one pint of blood. The victim is up and around without penalties within 1D6 minutes, although he will feel nauseous, weak and tired for the next 4D6 hours; same penalties as losing one pint of blood, above.

Losing 4-5 pints (or 40-62.5% for Host Armor, War Mount or Biotic) of blood: Is getting into the danger zone. There is a 1-80% chance of passing out for 1D6 hours. The victim is extremely weak, can barely move, needs to drink fluids to avoid dehydration and sleeps 2D6+6 hours a day for the next 2D4 days. Not good in the Icarus Desert. Penalties: -1 on Perception Rolls, -3 on initiative, -2 attacks per melee round, reduce all combat bonuses by half, the performance of skills is -30% and reduce Spd by 50%.

The character can move around for a period of minutes equal to the character's P.E. before collapsing, exhausted or passing out; 1-60% chance of passing out for 1D6 hours. For example: A character with a P.E. 12 can exert himself, with the previously described penalties in place, for 12 minutes of activity before collapsing. He must rest or sleep for at least an hour before he is able to exert himself for another 12 minutes.

The weakened condition and penalties last 2D4+3 days with rest or 1D4+1 weeks if the person refuses bed rest and continues to exert himself. Such a foolish person is subject to numerous collapses which could do 4D6 damage from falling, as well as suffers from fever and requires 14+1D6 hours of sleep a day. Will have to be carried/transported by others to travel.

A blood transfusion adding a minimum of two to three pints of blood reduces the recuperation period to 8D6 hours – back on his feet in a day or two and pretty much back to normal, no penalties.

The Healing abilities of a Saint or Engineer can also restore the victim of blood loss. The equivalent of 60 Hit Points of healing is needed to restore four pints (1.9 liters) of blood. The victim is up and around within 1D6 minutes, but feels nauseous, weak and tired for the next 3D6+12 hours. Use penalties for losing one pint of blood.

Losing 6-7 pints (or 60-87.5% for Host Armor, War Mount or Biotic) of blood: puts the character in great jeopardy, and the individual falls into a light coma. Medical treatment is required. Without medical treatment, the character never regains consciousness and will die. The victim of this severe blood loss can last for one hour per P.E. attribute point +2D6 hours.

Receiving medical treatment and 3-4 pints of blood should bring the victim out of the coma; roll to save vs coma/death with a bonus of +40% in addition to his usual bonuses to save vs coma. The person can be back to normal after 1D4 days of rest, but continues to suffer the penalties for losing 2-3 pints of blood for an additional 2D6+10 days; feels under the weather and sluggish.

Saints or Engineers can restore the person in a matter of minutes, provided enough contact and time are allotted. The equivalent of healing 60 Hit Points gets the character out of the coma and feeling reasonably well. Penalties are the same as losing 2-3 pints of blood and last for 1D4+2 days. The equivalent of healing 90 Hit Points gets the character up to normal within 1D6+6 minutes and automatically saves vs coma/death.

Losing eight pints (or 80% for Host Armor, War Mount or Biotic) of blood: Is near death. Almost all the blood has been drained. Unless a transfusion to add blood is started within 20 minutes, the person will die. Receiving medical treatment and four pints of blood is likely to restore the person to life; roll save vs coma/death (no special bonus). The person can be back to normal after 1D6+2 days of rest. Feels a bit under the weather for an additional week; tired, sluggish; -2 on initiative. Possible brain damage! Roll percentile dice: A roll of 1-33% means permanent brain damage; reduce I.Q. by one (1) point.

Saints or Engineers can restore the person more quickly and offers a +5 to save versus coma for every 20 Hit Points pumped into that individual, but there is still a chance of brain damage. Remember, the equivalent of 15 Hit Points from magic or psionic healing restores one pint of blood.

Losing nine or more pints (or 90%+ for Host Armor, War Mount or Biotic) of blood: Means death. Only extensive and immediate – within five minutes – medical treatment (unless the Biotech creature has the **Lazarus Glands** Bio-Enhancement; see **Splicers® RPG**, page 87) provides any chance for survival, but even this is a remote possibility; -40% to save vs coma/death.

Immediate healing is a slim possibility to save the victim of near total blood loss. Again, the person must be treated within five minutes, unless placed in a Gene Pool before an Engineer, which can bring the victim back to normal without side effects. Numerous Healing Touches (the equivalent of 90 Hit Points) may also save the individual. Roll save vs coma as normal, but with side effects.

Side Effects: 01-20% Permanent brain damage. Reduce I.Q. by two points and the performance of all skills is -5%. 21-40% Permanent brain damage. Reduce M.E. attribute by two points. 41-60% Roll on random insanity table in this chapter or from

the core rule book. 61-80% Permanent physical damage: Reduce P.E. attribute and Hit Points by 1D4 points. 81-90% Permanent physical damage: Reduce Spd attribute by 1D6 points. 91-00% Lucked out, no damage. **Note:** A Restoration spell can be performed later to eliminate any of the side effects listed above, other than insanity.

Note 3: A **Saint** however, can easily overcome the blood loss and help victims regenerate by utilizing the Healing Touch to restore 2D8 Hit Points and S.D.C. (or 2D6 M.D.C. to Mega-Damage beings), once per melee round. The Healing Touch takes 1D4 melee rounds (up to one minute). The Saint can further alleviate penalties with the increased healing ability which stimulates the healing energies dramatically and increases the patient/victim's recuperative abilities. Hit Points and S.D.C. (or M.D.C. to Bio-Technology) recovery are double the normal treatment rate.

If a victim is brought before an **Engineer**, the Hit Points and S.D.C. (or M.D.C. to Bio-Technology) recovery are triple the normal professional treatment rate. The increased healing lasts for 24 days after the Engineer stimulates the patient's system, so any subsequent injury will also heal at the increased rate. It takes 1 minute to induce Increased Healing. The Engineer's Healing Touch restores 4D8 Hit Points and S.D.C. (or 5D6 M.D.C. to Mega-Damage beings) every minute until the Engineer decides to break physical contact. The Healing Touch can only be used on other living creatures, never on the Engineer himself. More complex damage must be healed within the Gene Pool. In this case, the healing session restores 4D8 Hit Points and S.D.C. (or 5D6 M.D.C. to Mega-Damage beings) every 5 minutes until the Engineer's work is done.

(Engineer information listed above is written by Chris "Slappy Kluge, for future Splicers source material, provided by Charles "Chuck" Walton Jr.)

Note 4: Any Biotech weapon, biotech armor, War Mount or Biotic equipped with Acid Blood will immediately burn the stinger, plus the initial vacuum of blood that is automatically drained by the Scarabick Soldier Ant will double the Acidic damage for double the duration to the entire Stinger Tail and also causes a burning acidic reflux to the digestive system of the War Ant. This indigestion burn will last for 1D4 days, making it painful for the Scarabick to feed, unless treated by a Saint.

3. Quill Launchers: Adorning the neck and back of the ant's thorax are three rows of quill launchers. When alarmed, angered or excited, these 12 inch (30.4 cm), sharp needles stand up like that of a porcupine. The quills are made of a natural ceramic-like compound that is strong enough to pierce even the toughest of metal alloys.

Mega-Damage: The Quills inflict 3D6 M.D. to anyone grappling with the Scarabick or are trying a wrestling hold, squeeze attack, bite attack or body block or pounce/leap attack onto the ant's back. Likewise, adversaries throwing a punch or kick at the ant's back will inflict damage but also take 1D6 M.D. in return from the rows of quills. **Note:** The quills can be pulled out by hand by a Colonial Shepherd and thrown up to 20 feet (6.1 m), with 1D6 M.D. damage per quill (up to three can be pulled out at one time). If the Shepherd chooses, he can order the ant to fire the quills at short-ranged targets as each quill is fitted with its own micro-launcher. This increases the damage to 1D8 M.D. per single quill. A burst of four does 3D8 M.D., or a burst of eight does 6D8 M.D. to the same target. The quills can also be used to spray a small area (about a 10 foot/3 m radius), but without any bonus to strike

and typically hitting each target within its radius to attack with one quill; 1D8 M.D.).

Maximum Effective Range: 50 feet (15.2 m).

Rate of Fire: Each single shot or volley counts as one melee attack. The radius blast counts as three.

Payload: Each row contains forty quills, and each quill regrows within just 10 minutes.

Bonuses: +1 to roll with punch, fall or impact. A single quill fired can be accurately aimed (+3 to strike) and counts as one melee attack. Bursts are less accurate (only +1 to strike) but inflict more damage when they hit. The radius blast is a scattershot and gets no bonuses. Only these bonuses apply to the Quill Launcher attacks, do not include others.

Desert Rose Mega-War Mount

To live and survive in the deep deserts, and avoid being discovered by the machine or other rival houses, the House of Red Sands needed a sizable mobile base of operations that could transport their War Mounts, infantry and supplies. Such a transport could also serve as an emergency evacuation transport should they be discovered and have to evade a massive invasion. The giant, sea-faring War Mount known as the **Kraken**, is making an impressive name for itself among the Resistance as a formidable battle carrier. It was developed by **Great House Artemis** (see **The Rifter® #30**, pages 56-61), and was a major source of inspiration for the Desert Rose. However, this would not be a design that could flourish off of the abundance of available food and prey that roamed the deep oceans. This was the barren desert of Icarus, where food and water are scarce treasures to be cherished. Furthermore, the ocean provided a great hiding place for the massive Kraken War Mount and helped support its massive weight. Anything as large on land would be crushed by its own weight and its movements would easily trigger seismic tremors that could easily give away its location to enemies or even cause the very ground beneath it to collapse. Developing a land based war mount of comparable scale would require some serious planning and designing.

Junior Librarian Maharaja begged for this tremendous task and there were many horrific and costly failures before he got it right. There simply weren't many land creatures that could distribute the weight and economy of girth required to support the daunting requirements that **Ustada Jigisha** required. Maharaja looked to other creatures for the final solution and came up with the sea star (commonly known as starfish) as his foundational building block. It could see and move in any direction, distribute its weight wonderfully with its numerous arms and thousands of smaller tube feet located on the *oral side* (underneath it). This enables the massive War Mount to remain relatively quiet, though at a slow pace, but it also would not compromise the earth below it and is able to gauge safe travel ways with its seismic senses. The amazing regeneration principles of sea stars to regrow limbs, even if the sea star only has a small portion of its central disk left, was a great motivation for the Librarian to use these creatures as the core building block to expand upon. These features contained all the hallmarks the desperate Librarian needed to prove that he was capable of making an epic design better than the caliber of

the House's Senior Librarian, **Amoghavarsha** – and Maharaja's rival.

The Desert Rose is Maharaja's work in progress that is steadily maturing, undergoing testing and yielding positive results for the House of Red Sands. The War Mount's design is based off a 6 pointed Crown of Thorns and the Blood Star sea stars, only drastically upsized and armed with an array of bio-weapons to become a mobile fortress platform. Though the Desert Rose is "capable" of functioning underwater (not below 2,000 feet/610 m) in theory, it has not been proven for such depths, nor is it something that Maharaja is willing to test as of yet. It has only seen the sea of sand in the deep Icarus Desert, hundreds of miles from water.

Underneath the Desert Rose, on its *Oral Side*, are defensive clusters of Serrated Tentacles designed for close quarter combat. Each Six Point Star Tentacle and the central disk section has multiple clusters of these Serrated Tentacles that are used to used to deter invaders and alien predators from attacking or boarding the War Mount. Covering the dorsal side of each tentacle are sharp, armored scales called osteoderms that resemble the plated scutes of a crocodile's back. Despite their semi-armored appearance, these prehensile tentacles are extremely flexible and are supported by thousands of small, transparent tubes (feet) that can propel each tentacle to reach speeds up to 60 mph (96 km) in order to chase adversaries down. Each Serrated Tentacle is 20 feet (6.1 m) wide at its base and is able to extend up to 1,200 feet (366 m). This enables the jagged tentacles to twist and turn and reach around the entire top side of the Desert Rose to seize or scrape off any assailants that try to scale or climb atop of the Desert Rose.

Each tentacle also has an Armored Compound Eye at its end, providing valuable visual information during combat, or when the War Mount is on the move. The tentacles are very adept at lacerating, slashing and parrying opponents that seek to attack it from below. They are guided by the onboard Nymphs who utilize the array of sensors and armored optics, which comes in handy when stealthy enemies are nearby or when removing any foreign devices attached to the mobile fortress. All of the large spines and various weapons visible on the Desert Rose are retractable (taking only 1D4+2 melee actions) and allows the mobile fortress to move along the bedrock beneath the ocean of sand with less resistance.

Currently, the House only has one half mature Desert Rose, with several larvae Desert Roses in their gestation period. Once these younger Desert Roses hatch and congregate together with the larger Desert Rose, they will be called The Garden. Each Desert Rose will be given a unique name: Resolute, Faith, Nobility, Vigilance, Patience, Hope, Valiant and Harmony (the mature Flagship in which the presiding Ustad(a) will reside).

Class: Submersible and Land Based Mobile Fortress and Caravan Transport.

Crew: 4 Bridge pilots called "**Nymphs**" (see description below under Senses and Features) are permanently bonded to the War Mount.

Population Capacity: A combination of 500 human, armored troops and family (675 in cramped circumstances). Here is the current breakdown of the soldiers and other O.C.C.s on board the growing Desert Rose, called "Harmony":

Archangels – 30%

Biotics (Xeric Guards) – 15%

Dreadguards – 15%

Falconers – 4%

Gardeners – 2%
 Geneticist – 2%
 Outriders – 11%
 Packmasters – 8%
 Roughnecks – 5%
 Skinjobs – 4%
 Swarm Lords – 3%
 Other Non-Combatants – 1%
 2 Engineers
 1 Librarian (Maharaja)
 2 Saints
 4 Ustad(a) Teachers/Observers

M.D.C. by Location (Increase by 20% for an adult Desert Rose):

*Barbed Tentacle Armored Compound Eye (27) – 50
 *Periscopic Tentacles (3) – 150 M.D. to sever the tentacle.
 Deployment Tubes (6) – 200 each
 Needle Death Blossom Spires (12) – 300 each
 Organic Rockets (120) – 20 each
 Casting Cannons (9) – 100 each
 *Heat Projection Cannons (18) – 140 each
 Armored Eyelids for Pulsars (30, 2 for each Pulsar) – 100 each
 *Pulsar Pearls (15) – 200 each
 Underbelly Serrated Tentacles (27) – 250 each
 Six Star Points – 8,500 each
 Underbelly of the Six Star Points – 4,000 each
 Hatches at ends of Star Points (6) – 1,200 each (This is also where the transport tubes exit through.)
 Transportation Tube Feet (16,500) – 50 each (2,000 under each Star Point Tentacle and 4,500 under the Central Disk Section/Main Body.)
 Underbelly of Main Body – 10,200***
 Reinforced Pilots' Compartment (Bridge) – 8,400**
 Main Body (Central Disk Section) – 20,500***

* A single asterisk indicates a small, low profile, or shielded target that is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a "Called Shot" to hit such targets, and even then is -3 to strike.

** The design of the Desert Rose lacks a conventional head, but what could be described as the bridge of the War Mount is the reinforced pilots' compartment inside the main body of the Rose. It was designed like this to provide extra protection to the permanently bonded pilots (Nymphs) and help increase the chance of the War Mount recovering from a hard battle or cave-in.

*** Depleting the Main Body M.D.C. to zero (or less) destroys the War Mount. If they are threatened or injured, the Desert Rose may lose its arm or even multiple arms. Not to worry—it will grow back! Even if a sea star only has a small portion of its central disk left, it can still regenerate its arms. The Desert Rose is more heavily armored at the central disk section, so it can absorb greater amounts of damage and protect its inhabitants before being destroyed. If its outer shell is breached, the War Mount will take on sand or water and the interior passageways of the war mount will flood quickly. The hatches at the ends of each Star Point are designed to automatically open when the Desert Rose is severely breached or killed to give any passengers a chance to escape.

Speed:

Running: The Desert Rose has thousands of clear tube feet that extend from ambulacral grooves underneath the star's body and

six point tentacles. The giant starfish moves at a steady rate of 10 mph (16 km) using hydraulic pressure combined with adhesion. It sucks in sand to fill up the tube feet, which extends them. To retract the tube feet, it uses muscles. When commanded, it can reach 20 mph (32 km) for 2 hours, but needs to slow back down to 5 mph (8 km) for the next 4 hours to cool off and to reduce the large amounts of lactic acid build-up. **Note:** The Desert Rose uses a combination of adhesives to stick to a surface or substrate (or prey) and a separate chemical to detach themselves. This allows the mobile base to move around as well on non-porous substances, such as a smooth surfaces where there wouldn't be suction as well as non-porous substances and can even crawl in descending or ascending fashion up steep hills and rocks up to angles of 60 degrees without sliding. This allows it to safely navigate the desert floor and deep subterranean caves without much difficulty. Leaping: Not possible.

Digging: 10 mph (16 km). It takes 2D6 minutes to dig a hole large enough for concealment within the loose sandy desert, beach shores or soft soil. Double that through hard soil and loose rocks. 4D6 hours through hard rock, concrete, minerals and ice.

Swimming: The Desert Rose can crawl along the ocean floor at the same speed as it can on land. The War Mount also has a ballast system that engages when it is reaching its maximum depth tolerance. When the ballasts are engaged and push off the underwater floor, the subtle undulating belly assists in swimming, propelling the Desert Rose at a snail pace of 6.2 mph (10 km). This has yet to be tested in the deep oceans, only in deep, underground lakes for now.

Underwater Depth: 2,000 feet (610 m), in theory. It has not gone beyond the coastal shelf, yet. The reason for this is that the mobile fortress is protected by the immense quantity of sand when it rests on the bedrock in the depths of the great desert or lake. Deep ocean floors are far more unpredictable and less supportive of such a massive creature and it would be a travesty to the house to lose such a long-term investment due to an ocean floor collapsing and bringing the creature into depths and pressures that it and its inhabitants could not withstand.

Note: Currently, the House of Red Sands does not want to be discovered by other Great Houses and the ocean contains many dangers within its dark depths. From various underwater conditions, numerous houses of the Resistance, dreaded Krakens, and an array of alien predators being introduced by the machine's personality Gaia. Losing all of the invaluable resources invested into the Desert Rose and its crew would be a major loss that the Red Sands is not willing to risk.

Flying: Not possible.

Statistical Data:

Note: The first Desert Rose, *Harmony*, has reached its full scale but is still growing, hardening and maturing on the inside. So none of the stats below need to be adjusted for an adult Desert Rose.

Height: 200 feet (61 m), not including retractable spikes/spires that are on average 30 feet (9.1 m) in height.

Diameter: 1,000 feet (305 m). Its central disk section (Main Body) is 500 feet (152.4 m) in diameter while the 6 points of the starfish are 250 feet (76.2 m) in length, making the total diameter 1,000 (305 m).

Weight: 95,000 tons. Despite its massive size and heavy Dry Muscle enhancement, its soft interior tissues and numerous pas-

sageways throughout its body and tentacles also makes it a mostly hollow creature.

Cargo: Can store 16,000 tons of cargo and has ample room for 40 War Mounts. Due to the House's philosophy on mimicking insects in combat, the number of War Mounts is quite low. The Desert Rose can house:

- 3 Desert Judges (9 if they are tightly curled in balls).
 - 9 Nova Hawks
 - 12 Moloks
 - 9 Kamikaze Missiles (See **The Rifter** # 30, pages 54-56).
- Easily house the Black Talon War Hawks for 5 Falcons.
- Easily house the Gorehounds for 4 Pack Masters.

Physical Strength: 51 (for tentacles) Supernatural.

Production Cycle: 15 year gestation period, plus 60 year growth cycle until maturity.

Operational Lifetime: 170 years once it reaches maturity.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 1D6x10+5 M.D. per melee round.

Horror Factor: 11, due to tentacles, large scale, deadly array of armament and rumors. None to machines.

Feeding: The Desert Rose is a Lithovore War Mount. Like many ruminant animals (animals that have multiple stomachs), it has 4 maws, three situated on its belly (ventral) side and one internally in the Engineer's chamber to allow the Geneticists to feed the Desert Rose its valuable minerals from the internal chambers that are well-protected.

Because of the inclusion of Dry Muscle and the conservation of water into the design, the Desert Rose only needs 30 tons of minerals (clay, dirt, rocks, stones, etc.) each day.

Color: the Desert Rose keeps in key with the sand plume color that most of the house follows. However, the Desert Rose can secrete a substance onto its back that paints its shell red and also turns the sand red as a major warning or a declaration of all-out war.

Sleep Requirements: As an artificially created organism, the Desert Rose only requires six hours of sleep per day. However, even when asleep, the Desert Rose can remain crawling at 10 mph (16 km) in one designated direction. Must be awakened to change direction or to stop.

Other Data:

Alignment: Principled. The Nymphs (bridge crew) are chosen to be the embodiment of what the House represents. Normally, two warriors and two civilians are selected. They work as one mind to protect the inhabitants of the Desert Rose.

War Mount Attributes: I.Q. 22 (incorporates the Nymphs' intelligence that control it), M.E. 26, M.A. 18, P.S. 51 (Supernatural), P.P. 5, P.E. 27, P.B. 10, Spd 20 mph (32 km).

Number of Attacks per Melee: 16 (up to three bio-weapons of any combination can be fired as a single volley, unless specified as otherwise.)

Combat Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +5 to strike, +4 to parry, but dodging is not possible; +4 to disarm, +6 to pull punch, +5 to save vs psionics, +75% to save vs coma/death, +7 to save vs magic, critical strike on an unmodified 18-20, Paired Weapons, and +7 to strike with long-range bio-weapons.

Combat Capabilities:

- Restrained Tentacle Strike: 6D6 M.D.
- Full Strength Tentacle Strike: 2D6x10 M.D.
- Crush with Main Tentacle: 1D12x10+20 M.D.
- Power Tentacle Strike: 3D8x10+30 M.D.

Bite: 1D4x100 M.D. The annular Maws on the ventral (belly) side of the Desert Rose are designed to eat sand and crush rock, but it is in no position for combat purposes, unless something goes directly beneath the War Mount. An exception to this is the rare occasion when the Desert Rose is topside, and it lifts its main body off the ground (no more than 33 feet/10 m) and balanced on the star points. Three tentacles emerge from around the annular maw and draw prey to its mouth.

Rolling Crush with Six Point Tentacle or Main Body: Despite what one might think, being crushed underneath the Desert Rose is not as devastating as one might fear but it is nonetheless, an extremely horrific experience. The initial crushing damage causes 1D8x10 M.D. to anything caught beneath the bulk of a six point tentacle or the central disk section, (reduce to 1D4x10 M.D. for all exterior less heavy parts of the Desert Rose). The reason for this is due to the numerous, flexible tube feet and the soft sand or loose soil that are compressing the victim. The victims are more so smothered and pressed deeply into the soft ground below and not against a hard, crushing, rock surface, that would otherwise deliver an additional 1D4x10 M.D. to victims. Victims caught underneath the Desert Rose however, experience not only the pain of being crushed, but also the slow-moving War Mount keeps the victim pinned under it until it has passed over them. Fortunately, characters can dig themselves out in their next melee action, but they do lose one melee attack as they recover from the cumbersome trampling.

Characters caught underneath the Desert Rose for more than one melee round must roll on the following Insanity Table.

01-25% Reoccurring Nightmares. Character has trouble going to sleep or remaining asleep for periods of time beyond 1D4 hours. This causes stress and fatigue to the character (-5 to all skill rolls that require Mental Endurance), and the character has a 01-35% chance of falling asleep on guard duty or lying in wait for long periods of time.

26-50% Phobia: Tentacles and Seastars. When facing anything that has a lot of tentacles and/or suction cups or resembles a sea star, it causes the character to have flashbacks of being pinned underneath and run over by the Desert Rose. The character will have to save vs the Horror Factor of the tentacle/seastar creature/Host Armor/War Mount/etc., and the character's defense for the Horror Factor is penalized by -4 (horror for ordinary Seastars is 13 to this character).

51-75% Obsession: Crimson Vengeance. This character is so angered or humiliated by the actions of the House of Red Sands and what he has suffered, that he will go to extremes to seek out vengeance against its members and its biotech creations. When the character sees even a glimpse of a Red Sands soldier or War Mount, they are sent into a violent rage and will try to hunt down and bring them to justice by capturing the soldier(s) or destroying their War Mounts. This obsession means he believes that the House of Red Sands is simply hiding from the war and using the intra-guild as a cowardice excuse. They see the house as a traitor that would rather hide in the desert than to help protect the innocent lives that suffer daily at the machine's expense. They will not negotiate or befriend any member of the house of Red Sands and will always distrust any member of the Red Sands, even if they are a deserter.

76-00% Phobia: Large War Mounts. There is a chance that the character will be leery of War Mounts larger than a Behemoth. When the character is around very large War Mounts, he

will begin to have a shortness of breath and become semi-cata-tonic. During these times the character shuts down for 1D4 melee actions, as the character just stands in a blank, coma-like state, after which the character will recover completely, as if nothing strange had happened.

Senses and Features:

Advanced Sight: Every eye on the Barbed Tentacles can see clearly at a distance up to one mile (1.6 km). They also possess passive night vision 2,000 feet (610 m) and polarized vision to block out the glare and reflective light.

Sound Amplifying Hearing: The periscopic tentacles can also hear a whisper at 300 feet (91.4 m) and 1,200 feet (366 m) when underwater.

The sense of taste and smell is roughly one hundred times more sensitive than humans.

The Desert Rose can automatically sense magnetic north.

The War Mount has a sea star Vascular System that has canals in which water and sand, instead of blood, circulates throughout the War Mount's body. Water and minerals are drawn into the Desert Rose's body and processed through small body plates of Mega-Damage, calcium carbonate called the **Madreporite**. Sand and water can be sucked both in and out through these orifices. Sand and water brought into the madreporite flows into a ring canal, which surrounds the Desert Rose's central disk. From there, it moves the sand and water into radial canals in the War Mount's arms and then into the thousands of tube feet.

Tube Feet Oxygen Support System: In addition to their use in movement, the thousands of tube feet are also used for gas exchange. Through its tube feet, as the Desert Rose crawls across the sand, it can take in and purify oxygen and release carbon dioxide for the entire population aboard it.

The War Mount also has CO2 scrubbers for which it uses the carbon as part of its food requirements. Some of the CO2 is directed to internal garden chambers where Gardeners are able to grow and maintain Bio-Engineered algae, edible plants, vegetables and onboard estuary pools that contain small fish and edible crustaceans like crayfish, shrimp and crabs for protein. Food is produced on a weekly basis to sustain all inhabitants and War Mounts aboard the Desert Rose.

Nymphs: The Desert Rose's pilots are unlike any other pilots or Outriders encountered in the Resistance. Each pilot is called a *Nymph* and were once young women who volunteered to sacrifice their individuality for the greater good of the Red Sands. The volunteers had their bodies augmented similar to the process of a Biotic (inside a Gene Pool) and were permanently attached to pods that resemble Bio-Engineered, recliner chairs that control the Desert Rose. Each Nymph resembles a very attractive (P.B. of 28 or higher), 8 foot tall (2.4 m) female mermaid creature with the lower half of their bodies and legs fused together like a serpent and submerged into a green, viscous neurolytic liquid that drains deep below the floor of the bridge. A pair of translucent tubes are attached from each pod to the Nymph's temples and backs. They are now M.D.C. beings (2D10 M.D.C. each) and are the only Splicers that can communicate and control the Desert Rose symbiotically. The Nymphs understand vocal communications with other fellow Splicers and speak in a complete semi-seductive unison or "harmony" when talking to humans/Splicers. When they speak to one another however, they prefer to use various clicks, hums and whistling noises that ONLY they understand.

Nymphs are permanently bonded to their corresponding pod and their bodies can not engage in combat (not even to defend themselves), and they can not be removed or they will die within 1D4 hours. The bio-maidens can however, operate any Desert Rose weapons system like the Serrated Tentacles to defend the exterior of their quarters before a breach occurs. As a last resort defense, each pod can create a powerful Bio-Force Field (3D6x10+20 M.D.C.) to protect the Nymph, hopefully, long enough for help to arrive. With the lethal, stealthy capabilities of Skin Jobs, this was a necessity. Maharaja is working on new interior defenses for the Desert Rose and views onboard Gardeners as a vital key to eliminating any potential intruders.

Crew Quarters: The Nymphs are located inside a protected chamber on the bridge. Each sits in a temperature regulated cushion of nutrient liquid gel and are fed nutrients and vital fluids, intravenously from the War Mount's system. Dedicated Geneticist also provide different foods, minerals and fluids for a balanced diet and taste.

Living Quarters: Because the Desert Rose is both a mobile caravan and fortress, there are soldiers, families of soldiers, Saints, and a council that inhabit the War Mount from time to time. There are also small barracks chambers that can house a family of four, or uncomfortably, a family of seven. These small rooms are spread throughout around the War Mount, with most distributed within the star points base and not in the central region.

War Mount Corral: The War Mounts are stored in a large chamber located in the central disk section of the Desert Rose. Only the Desert Judges have cramped quarters as they can curl up into tight balls while resting. The Nova Hawks each have a perch that they rest on but are able to move around and are able to stretch their wings and flap. While the Molok have resting chambers, partially filled with sand.

Gorehound Kennel: A neighboring room to the Corral is a kennel for the Gorehounds. The four Packmasters each have a roomy cage dedicated to their hounds. The Gorehounds are familiar with each pack and its Packmaster and are receptive to taking commands from the other Packmasters and joining their pack if their master is killed.

Aviary: Much like the Packmasters, the Falconers are a small, close-knit group with a smaller chamber than the kennels, as the Avians sit on perches and rest for the most part.

The chamber is shared by five Falconers and their hawks/vultures.

Nursery: This large chamber houses both allocated Engineers for the Desert Rose and the Geneticists that assist them. Not forgetting all the maturing organic technology and War Mounts that they care for. It is also where the Desert Rose's internal mouth, the Madreporite, is located.

Night's Veil: An amazing design, this deployable sail can collect up to 29-37 gallons (100+1D4x10 liters) of dew and moisture in the air on a cool night. It might not seem like a lot, but due to the dry muscle incorporated into the Bio-Engineered creatures, the need for water has been significantly reduced. For this to work, the Desert Rose needs to be no more than 30 feet (9 m) beneath the surface for the veil to be deployed.

Deployment Tubes (6): To allow the Desert Rose to remain hidden and protected deep under the sand while their forces can engage threats, the War Mount has a series of extendable hollow tentacles (more like collapsible wind pipes) that extend from

the ends of each of the six points of the giant starfish. They are a great means of deploying infantry as the tubes easily extend, are extremely flexible and move independently from one another through the sand and can retract after deployment or remain open. However, solid ground deserts are a different thing. Normally, the House will bury the Rose and the Deployment Tubes will be activated and remain open at designated entrance points (normally in caves or between rock formations). Continuous movement of the tubes through solid ground will give their location away due to the easily visible disturbance and seismic activity. If a Deployment Tube is discovered, upon command by a Nymph, the tube immediately closes and retracts, thus collapsing the tunnel behind it. The Transport Tubes have a maximum elastic range of 800 feet (244 m), but they are hollow systems that were not built for combat.

Ejection Spires (9): On the aboral Surface of the Desert Rose there are nine extendable ejection spires for the deployment of the Archangels (one squad at a time). The Thorny Devils and Dune Vipers can also use these spires, but they were incorporated into the design for rapid deployment of the Archangels, to mimic an angry hornets' nest. The Spires are completely hidden until they are extended, reaching 60 feet (18.3 m) above the Desert Rose, so the War Mount needs to be within that height to the surface. (An alternate for the Desert Rose to remain submerged deeper than 60 feet (18.3 m) is to have tunnels and holes dug for the spire openings to align with. One soldier can be deployed through each spire at a time, and it only takes one melee round for one Archangel to reach the surface, per melee round. (So two Archangels can be deployed in two melee rounds, three Archangels in three melee rounds and so on, per spire). The tubes are completely hidden until extended, and they can be aimed in nearly any direction. Only one soldier can be deployed through each tube at one time, but it only takes one melee round to fire one trooper and load up another to be fired the next round. Of course, anyone fired from one of these tubes will be flying through the air at 200 mph (320 km), so it is best to have some sort of protection (or flight capabilities). The launch tubes can fire troopers up to 1000 feet high (305 m). So unless the soldiers being deployed have flight capabilities, it is crucial to keep in mind how deep the Desert Rose is buried and how far above the surface the soldier is anticipated to be launched. Also, bear in mind that damage to the underground tunnels could also trigger the tunnel to collapse and any Archangel(s) that were flying in the tight, underground tunnels will be trapped and buried until they either dig themselves out or are rescued.

Periscopic Tentacles (3): These one foot (0.3 m) thick tentacles can extend up to 1,200 feet (366 m) to reach the surface. Only one Periscopic Tentacle is used at one time. As the name suggests, these tentacles act as periscopes, enabling the viewer to observe the activities on the surface of the desert or below the surface near water. Normally, the Desert Rose is buried and traveling 330 feet (100.5 m) below the desert surface, give or take 10%. The Periscopic Tentacle is sturdy and equipped with a compound eye system that gives a 360 degree view of the ground and a 180 degree arc of the sky above it. The eyes on the Periscopic Tentacles have Telescopic Vision and are able to see clearly for at a distance of two miles (3.2 km).

Bio-Comms: Every chamber has its own Bio-Comm, and there is open communication between rooms within the War Mount. External communication can be up to six miles (9.6 km).

Seismic Sense: Built along the Desert Rose's body are tiny receptors that can sense and feel various vibrations that surround the Mobile fortress. This enables the nymphs to detect opponents approaching from the ground and to make the necessary adjustments or alert the appropriate command to discern what actions to take, and is typically used to hide and evade detection.

Radar: Maximum range is 6 miles (9.6 km), but can only be used on the surface of the desert or body of water.

Super Regeneration: the Desert Rose regenerates at the phenomenal rate of 3D10x10+20 per melee. It can regenerate lost bio-weapons within 2D4 hours, Secondary Tentacles within 4D6 hours, Main Tentacles in 8D6 hours, and even an entire star point in 1D4 weeks.

Enhanced Operational Lifetime

Enhanced Neurological Connection

Desert Rose Bio-Weapon Systems:

G.M. Note: Whenever the Desert Rose enters into a major battle, it prefers to engage with its aboral side facing the most formidable threats, and strategically protecting its underside belly (the Oral Side of the sea star). This enables the Desert Rose to utilize and maximize the effectiveness of all its weapons and sensors. It will even reposition itself by burrowing sideways or upside down to bring all of its weapons to bear on approaching enemies adjacent to or beneath it. In most cases, the Desert Rose surfaces from beneath its foes and launches its onslaught.

1. Missile Launch Tubes (3): Each of these launch tubes can house a single Kamikaze Organic Cruise Missile. So these War Mounts don't starve to death while waiting for action, the tubes remain empty until a conflict is expected or planned. Seconds before the missiles are fired, retractable tentacles emerge from the launch tube walls to sever the restraints and the blindfolds that stop these creatures from launching prematurely.

Through a powerful muscle contraction, the tube fires the Kamikaze missile. Though not required as much for when in the desert, the House of Red Sands had to factor in the potential of being underwater. The Kamikaze can be launched from a maximum depth of 200 feet (61 m). The Nymphs mentally issue targeting commands via feeding an image of the target, including its direction and distance. This excites and agitates the Kamikaze. This process is very helpful at keeping the Kamikaze "on target" and there is only a 10% chance that the Kamikaze will break off and attack a higher priority target if one comes into view. Only Machines can be targeted. NEVER Splicers or even Technojackers (outside of any power armor, vehicle or robot) as the Kamikaze will not even attack such targets.

This firing method is the only means to command a Kamikaze to strike a large building such as the Machine's Industrial Centers and Robot Repositories.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Building.

Mega-Damage: 1D4x1,000 with a blast radius of 100 feet (30.5 m).

Effective Range: 1,000 miles (1,600 km) before needing to rest, but they will come across a robot and attack it long before that.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of 2 or 3.

Payload: The Desert Rose keeps nine Kamikazes active at one time, which is 3 per launch tube.

Bonuses: +2 initiative and +2 to strike. These are in addition to the standard bonuses Kamikaze Cruise Missiles already possess.

2. Organic Rockets (120): Dotted all over the aboral surface of the Central Disk Section and star points are 120 Organic Rocket ports. The Desert Rose wasn't designed to be an assault War Mount like the Kraken; it was designed to be a mobile fortress, and if need be, an emergency home! The Organic Rockets are used as anti-air weapons and also as a last resort defense against a deadly threat on the ground.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 5D10 M.D. with a blast radius of 10 feet (3 m).

Effective Range: 1 mile (1.6 km).

Rate of Fire: One at a time, or in volleys of any amount. However, the Bridge Crew rarely fire volleys of more than 10 at any one target.

Payload: 300 rockets, it takes 6D6 hours to regrow spent rockets.

Bonus: +5 to strike and dodge.

3. Heat Projection Cannons (18): Two can be located at the tip of each star point and another at each junction where the star points attach to the main body.

Primary & Secondary Purpose: Antipersonnel & Defense.

Mega-Damage: Two settings: a light 5D8 M.D. blast, or a heavy 1D8x10 +10 M.D. blast. The two HPCs at the end of each star point can fire at the same target.

Maximum Effective Range: 1,800 feet (549 m).

Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as one melee attack/action.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Bonus: +2 to strike.

4. Needle Death Blossom Spires (12): Much like a periscope rising from the hull of a submarine, there are a number of spires that rise from the aboral surface (back) of the Desert Rose. Each spire is 33 feet (10 m) tall and they operate exactly like the Needle Death Blossom but with an increased range.

Primary & Secondary Purpose: Antipersonnel & Defense.

Mega-Damage: A single needle does one M.D., a small volley does 1D8 M.D., a medium volley does 2D8 M.D. and a large volley does 4D8 M.D. Releasing most (80-100%) at once inflicts 1D12x10 M.D. to everything within a 50 foot (15.2 m) radius around the Desert Rose. The only ways to avoid damage is to dodge behind something large and heavy (can even be a part of the Desert Rose itself) or to burrow deep enough (at least 3 feet/0.9 m) into the ground.

Maximum Effective Range: 100 foot (30 m) radius.

Rate of Fire: Each directed, limited attack counts as one melee attack, a full-blown Needle Death Blossom attack that fires all the needles counts as three melee attacks/actions.

Payload: 6 rounds/volleys and each round is regenerated in 1D4 hours.

5. Pulsar Pearls (Heavy Light Cell Laser Cannon) (15): The House of the Red Sands has designed one of the most powerful Light Cell weapons devised by Splicers. Nine of these Pulsars are located on the aboral surface (back) of the Desert Rose (one on each arm of the star and three on the central body around the central retractable spire). The other six are found below the Heat Projection Cannons where the star points attach to the main body. The Pulsars look like large nodes, but are in fact armored membranes or eyelids. When they open, they reveal the pearl-looking Pulsars, which are a new type of Super Light Cells that discharge in rapid fire bursts. They are very efficient for anything that crosses the War Mount's path, and work particularly well against flying assailants. They do however, have only a 60 degree firing arch, but up to two pulsars can be fired

at the same target. The House designed the weapon for this War Mount due to its slow movement, and knowing all too well that the enemy would target the weapon the moment it was identified, it allowed them to attack with other weapons.

Primary & Secondary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft & Anti-Personnel.
M.D.C. of the Pulsar: Each armored eyelid has 100 M.D.C. while the Pearl is 200 M.D.C.

Mega-Damage: 3D6+5 M.D. per single burst, 1D6x10+10 M.D. per double burst or 2D6x10+15 M.D. for a triple burst. **Note:** If the Spires are extended when the Pulsars fire they will suffer damage (3D8+5 M.D.) and can not be fired until completely healed.

Rate of Fire: Each rapid-fire burst can be sustained for 5 seconds and then requires a cool down of one melee round (15 seconds) between shots. Up to three Pulsars can be fired simultaneously, but only a maximum of two can fire at the same target.

Maximum Effective Range: 4,000 feet (1,219 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Bonus: +4 to strike.

6. Casting Cannons (9): These weapons can only be used when on the surface. Mounted on the back of the Desert Rose, they are primarily used to defend against aerial attacks. The cannons can rotate to any angle to attack a target, but they are unable to arch down enough to attack threats that land on the Desert Rose's back (unless the threat is standing right next to the cannon).

Primary Purpose: Anti-Air Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Assault.

Mega-Damage: 6D8 +3 M.D. per individual round or 2D8x10 +10 M.D. per four round burst. **Note:** Lithovore bonus to casting damage has been included.

Maximum Effective Range: 3,000 feet (914 m).

Rate of Fire: Up to three weapons of any combination can be fired at one time. Each volley counts as one attack.

Payload: Each Casting Cannon holds 60 rounds for a total of 540 rounds. The War Mount can produce one replacement round per cannon every 2D4 melees.

Bonus: +3 to strike.

7. Underbelly Serrated Tentacles (27): Underneath the Desert Rose are defensive clusters of Serrated Tentacles (larger versions of the **Serrated Whips** Bio-Enhancement; see **Splicers® RPG**, pages 96-97) designed for close-quarter combat. Each Six Point Star Tentacle has 6 clusters of Serrated Tentacles and the central disk section has a ring of nine clusters. Each cluster contains 3 Serrated Tentacles, giving each Six Point Star arm of the Desert rose a total of 18 Serrated Tentacles, while the belly of the central disk has 27 Serrated Tentacles. They serve to deter invaders and alien predators from attacking or boarding the War Mount. Each Serrated Tentacle is equipped with an Armored Compound Eye at its tip for identifying targets and guiding the tentacles.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Ground Units.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

M.D.C. of Serrated Tentacles: 60 M.D. each., or 180 M.D. per cluster. It is a living tentacle appendage, so if a piece of it is severed, it writhes on the ground like a manic worm for 1D4 melee rounds before it stops. Even if cut to the quick, the dismembered tentacle regenerates within 24 hours.

Mega-Damage: 3D8+5 M.D. per lash of each Serrated Tentacle. May also be used to entangle or trip an opponent; roll to entangle

rather than strike, to coil the Serrated Tentacle saw around the target's limb/body. The teeth-like barbs dig into flesh, armor and metal, especially pitted and rough metal. Initial damage is 2D4 M.D., but it impairs that limb (cannot use it), and can be pulled by the War Mount to knock opponents off their feet (roll 1D20 same as strike and parry, high roll wins. If the winner is the defender he retains his balance and takes no damage from that attack. If the winner is the Desert Rose, its victim falls flat on their face or backside, loses two melee attacks/actions and suffers an additional 1D8 M.D.). This also places the victims in position for being rolled over by the Desert Rose (see above Rolling Crush with Six Point Tentacle or Main Body written above). A common tactic employed by Nymphs in control of these wicked tentacles is to entangle and violently snatch opponents underneath the mobile platform, to be slowly rolled over afterwards.

The entangled Tentacle can also be yanked in such a way that it inflicts damage without trying to knock an opponent down, to deliver an additional 2D8 M.D. (counts as one melee attack). 1D8 M.D. is also inflicted every time the victim tries to pull away or get free of the entangled Serrated Tentacle, and 2D8+5 M.D. is inflicted if the living tentacle coils and tightens its grip like a constricting snake (counts as one melee action). Entanglement may also hold and incapacitate an opponent who remains still in order not to take additional damage.

Maximum Effective Range: 500 feet (152 m).

Bonuses: +1 to strike and parry, +2 to disarm, and +4 to entangle. Bonuses apply only when the Serrated Tentacle is used.

Penalties: The Desert Rose's P.S. punch damage and other damage bonuses do NOT apply to any of the Serrated Tentacle attacks. Only One Serrated Tentacle will attack a selected target at a time as multiple Serrated Tentacles do not want to entangle or lacerate one another while grappling with the same target. Each Serrated Tentacle can however, attack separate targets (each counts as one melee attack).

Game Master Note:

Nymph Operating Bonuses: Similar to the **Outrider's, Union of Man and Beast** (see **Splicers® RPG**, page 110). When a Nymph takes control over a specific weapon system, she serves as a symbiotic Gunner and provides the additional Bonuses to that specific weapon system: +2 additional attacks per melee round, +4 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to disarm and +4 to entangle. These add to the standard Bonuses ONLY when a Nymph takes control. After which, the next Melee round the Desert Rose will sacrifice 2 melee attacks/actions for the next two melee rounds (total of 4 melee attacks lost, 2 per melee round), as the Nymph temporarily recovers from the massive Bio-E overload, called a "Burn Out."

This comes in handy during desperate times, strategic strikes or defenses, when the need or opportunity arises and can easily turn the tide in one melee round to save the Desert Rose or the House of Red Sands' haven or take out a deadly machine menace.

Only a maximum of (2) Nymphs can take control of two different weapon systems per Melee Round. Meaning, while that Melee Round might gain the Desert Rose four additional Melee Attacks/Actions that are dedicated to two specific weapon systems on the Desert Rose, the War Mount will also lose four melee attacks/melee actions for the next two Melee Rounds (8 total). So make each Nymph's gunnery bonuses count.

Template Biotic: Xeric Guard

"Serve the House well, and you may be chosen to be rewarded." – Said to be a quote from a reborn Xeric Guard.

Desert life is not for everyone, and very few are able to survive its merciless conditions. Those who manage to survive are sometimes driven into madness or are often too weak and vulnerable to put up much of a resistance. Those who manage to persist or adapt however, have proven that the Red Sands infantry needs to be carefully assembled with the limited availability of resources and be equipped to handle the variety of threats that are encountered in the unforgiving desert. Instead of the House using its devoted denizens as front-line infantry and cannon fodder, it has decided to recruit the desert's survivors along with the malevolent Waste Crawlers and enemy Splicer patrols that venture too far into the desert in pursuit of the mysterious House. If spotted and captured, these prisoners are detained for judgment and taken to the House's Second-in-Command Librarian, "Rema" for cerebral probing and interrogation. Unlike the oldest and youngest Librarians that reside in the hidden haven or aboard the Desert Rose, Rema resides at a secret Red Sands' outpost called **The Compound**. This underground facility is far from the Red Sands' primary haven. There, Rema is able to sift through the gathered intelligence about the outside world's current events and the affairs of the Resistance through her Xeric Conversion process. Any poor soul deemed by the House of Red Sands as sufficient enough to defend the Icarus Desert, has their memories and personalities involuntarily wiped by the Librarian's direct neural probe and their minds and bodies are prepped for the *Xeric Conversion process*. They are mummified using thin straps of the **Poor Man's Genetically Enhanced Leather Armor** (see **Splicers® RPG**, page 138). This material is literally grafted into their bodies as they are enhanced through genetic engineering and bio-reconstruction. The end result is a brainwashed disciple of the Red Sands that resembles a deadly-looking, armored mummy equipped with Biotech weapons and enhancements, called the *Xeric Guard*.

These Biotics are the sacrificial infantry for the House's armored militia and cavalry and are frighteningly utilized when times are tough, and as a last resort food source (literally) by the carnivorous members of the House. Perhaps even scarier is the Xeric Guard are converted into voracious carnivores and will even resort to cannibalizing weaker or injured Xeric members in order to sustain themselves to fulfill their assigned missions and prove their loyalty.

The Xeric envy naturally born members of the Red Sands and idolize the House's Ustad and Ustada as demigods. The Biotics hope to prove themselves worthy of their leaders in the belief and hope of becoming reborn as a **Red Sands Colonist**, Warrior or even wedding such a treasure. Anecdotal reports of heroic Xeric Guard Biotics vanishing and being mysteriously escorted away to hidden locations and being unwrapped and revealed as a handsome-looking man or extremely beautiful woman, and being betrothed to help procreate the newest generation of Red Sands heroes, drives the Xeric to extreme levels of heroism and sacrifice. Such propaganda and rumors are purposely leaked into

the Xeric's ranks and help fuel their beliefs and services. No one knows if such rumors are true or not nor has anyone been able to successfully disprove them.

Xeric Guard Biotics that have become impatient, lose faith, begin to doubt or were simply curious and tried to sneak a peek underneath their wrappings (if they are caught), are heavily scolded by fellow Xeric Guards, and reprimanded by Dreadguard, Ustad(a) or Librarian leadership. The Biotics are told that they are akin to a caterpillar in a cocoon and have prematurely exposed their maturing bodies and that their metamorphosis and growth will be prolonged even further in order to redeem their faith and their bodies. Xeric that are injured and a part of their body underneath the wrappings is exposed are explained that because they were hit, they still have room to improve and that it is simply not their time, yet.

Class: Template Infantry Biotic.

Level: One.

Alignment: Typically Scrupulous (20%), Unprincipled (35%), Anarchist (35%), and Aberrant (10%).

Attribute Requirement: None.

Attribute (conversion) Bonuses: +1D8 to P.S. and Spd, +1D6 to P.E., in addition to any genetic enhancements purchased via Bio-E points or skills selected.

Biotic O.C.C. Bonuses: Splicer P.S., +1 attack per melee round, +1 to initiative, +4 to strike, +1 to dodge, +2 to parry, +2 to pull punch, +2 save vs toxins/poisons and drugs, +10% save vs coma and death and +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

Base M.D.C.: P.E. x10 + 1D8 per level of experience starting at level 2. The Xeric Guard bio-regenerates 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round and can last ten times longer than normal during strenuous exercise/activity before feeling the effects of exhaustion. Therefore, Xeric Guards can remain alert and operate at full efficiency for three entire days (72 hours).

Biotic Biological Enhancements: Total Cost: 145 Bio-E.

Dry Muscle, Altered Physiology to retain water, Combat Spurs, Bone Claw Fingers (+4D6 M.D. for each hand), Double-Hinged Jaw*, Pincer Saber Teeth**, Organic Thrusters, Casting Thrower, Resistant to Heat, Advanced Eyes, Armored Eyes, Quick Clotting Blood, Sand Feet (see earlier description). They are also converted to a Carnivore Metabolism.

With their Dry Muscle and altered physiology, the Xeric Guard can go without water for 15+1D4 days. After the allotted time, the Biotic only needs to drink 0.8 to 1.8 gallons (3+1D4 liters) of water/blood and they will be fine for another 10+1D4 days.

* This Physical Enhancement adds an additional joint to the jaw (like that of the snake) of the Biotic/Host Armor or War Mount. This enables them to open their mouth considerably wider than usual in the vertical plane. This does not mean that this enhancement allows the recipient to eat large objects as their throats, organs, digestive system, musculature and skeletal structure would also have to be augmented to support such a feature. The Double-Hinged Jaw enhancement was designed to increase the bite diameter to enable the Pincer Saber teeth to be combined into the biting action and get a more secure bite of the intended target. **Note:** Please keep in mind that only so much of an item/limb will be able to fit into the mouth of a saber-toothed being (horizontally or vertically).

** Pincer Saber Teeth – These are retractable teeth on the inside of the jaw line and have been modified to act like a soldier ant's pincers. The Xeric Guard opens their wide mouth and a set of these pincer teeth project horizontally and deliver a nasty bite, adding an additional 1D8 M.D. to the bitten target. This Enhancement costs 5 Bio-E points.

Common Enhancements for the Xeric Guard:

Level 3: Casting Launcher (10), +2D6 M.D. for each Bone Claw Hand (20).

Level 6: +60 mph (96 km) to Speed of Organic Thrusters (30).

Level 9: Casting Rifle (20), Bio-Energy Expulsion Vent (10).

Level 12: Omni-Upgrade to Casting Rifle (35).

Common Skills: Standard, but with a -10% penalty to each skill.

O.C.C. Skill Program: Domestic (+10% but Wardrobe and Grooming is replaced with Bio-Comms), Infantryman (+15%), Outdoorsman and two skills of choice (except for Assassination, Host Pilot, Martial Artist, Medical Doctor, War Mount Rider, or Wingman).

Elective Skills: At level one the Xeric Guard receives Camouflage (+10%), Trap & Mine Detection (+10%) and Tracking.

Select one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, and 12. All new skills start at level on proficiency.

Secondary Skills: The character gets three Secondary Skills at level one, but does not receive addition skills with experience.

M.D.C. Living Body Armor: The Xeric Guard is nearly completely covered with grafted strips of the Leatherback Armor, providing a flexible Mega-Damage layer of armored skin that resembles a wicked, mummified soldier. Xeric Guard are not assigned nor given any additional armor as supplies and resources are scarce to the Red Sands and they would rather clad others within the Colony with real armor suits than that of an outsider recruit.

Standard Equipment: Given two hooded cloaks (both desert earth tones), one light Bio-Weapon of choice, emergency food rations (two week supply), empty plastic sacks/bags for transporting carcasses, basic toiletries and a few tattered pictures of attractive models as a constant reminder of inspiration.

Money: The Xeric Guard has no need for money, but may have a collection of credits and trinkets from their prey.

The Upside: Able to exist in one of the most harsh environments on the planet with little difficulty and an exceptional fighting machine.

The Downside: You are cannon fodder and when times are tough, you are literally the first in line to be fed to the hungry carnivores of the House (Desert Judge & Molok for example). The Xeric Guard are trained to deliver the carcasses of their victims to either one of the carnivorous members of their numbers (such as the Desert Judge).

Colonial Shepherds O.C.C.

The Red Sands leadership knew when they were bioengineering the Hydrants, that such a highly reproductive and profound species that became an essential part of the House's survival, would need ensured control, observation, preservation and efficiency over the numerous waves of these simple-minded creatures. Should these ants decide on a mutiny or suffer catastrophic losses in number, it would be a severe blow to the House's resources and haven stability. For the House to continue thriving off the massive coordinated efforts and resources of the Hydrants,

Usada Jigisha Kanta requested that the Red Sand's Senior Librarian, **Amoghavarsha**, develop special Splicer units that could watch over the precious laboring insects, guide them and ensure that no one tracked the Hydrants back to any of the secret supply depots, outposts or worse, the haven itself.

Librarian Amoghavarsha knew that the House needed a field scout that excelled in recon in the open and under the unpredictable dunes. With powerful winds or battles above the surface that triggered tunnels to collapse or being ambushed in narrow passageways by burrowing alien predators, machines, Waste Crawlers or rival Splicers, the challenge of wrangling, protecting and herding the ants would be extremely challenging. The Librarian theorized that the candidates would have to also be highly-skilled or trained in understanding, communicating, taking care of and overseeing these large insects.

Packmasters were field-tested and analyzed, but most preferred to stick with the more intelligent, faster and versatile Gorehounds. They didn't view the ants as a benefit to the overall pack, as the ants were perceived as more of a hindrance. Falconers were also tested, but there were too few of them and the House simply could not afford to divide or remove the Falconers from their current duties and upcoming missions. Swarm Lords were also tested, but their bulky Hive Armor did not satisfy the need of being a small profile scout that could effectively avoid detection and comfortably navigate the ants' passageways under the dunes. The Librarian determined that these special ant wranglers would need to have their own specialized Living Body Armor and skill sets to perform such daunting tasks.

Several years later, the Colonial Shepherds made their debut and are sometimes dubbed "*Ant Wranglers*" by hardier Red Sanders. These specialized commandos are issued their own signature Living Body Armor to fulfill their needs and are assigned specialized Bio-Engineered War Ants to help enforce and assist their roles. All of the Hydrants instinctively view the Red Sands' militia, War Mounts and its inhabitants as one single collective colony. The Shepherds and their assigned cadre of insects helps reinforce this instinctive programming.

War Ants might not be as intelligent, nor as fast or well equipped as Gore Hounds, but they are far more suited to surviving in the harsh desert terrain. Plus, if they are destroyed, they are easier and quicker to replace. So while the bond of a Colonial Shepherd is not expected to be as emotionally invested for each War Ant as the Packmaster is to each pack member; the ability to have a team of Bio-Engineered war creatures at your control is just as formidable. Perhaps even more so with the Shepherd. Unlike the Packmaster who must wait to be reissued a Gorehound pup, then wait for it to reach full maturity and train it to work efficiently with his established pack; the Colonial Shepherd can literally commandeer a War Ant from any existing patrol that are escorting Hydrant swarms. The Colonial Shepherd can easily install a new Biotech device called a "Tapper" into the ant's cerebral cortex and add it to his personal Ant cadre. As long as a slot is available within his personal Ant cadre and the War Ant is not under another Commander's Bio-Comm influence, then the War Ant can be added. Any Bio-Enhancements or non-standard bio-weapons that were invested into a lost War Ant will have to be replaced by one of the Red Sand's Engineers. Trying to add more War Ants to a Shepherd's cadre than available slots will overcharge the Bio-E in the Tapper and instantly kill the ant in the process. It will also cause 1D6 S.D.C. damage to the Shep-

herd who tried it, so it is very important to be sure that the War Ant being replaced is truly dead. War Ants that have been severed in half have still been known to be alive several hours later before perishing.

This instant replacement feature enables the Colonial Shepherd to last longer in the field via the available replacements and sustain performance more efficiently than any other pack-oriented Splicers operative. It allows the Shepherd to adjust his tactics based on each specific scenario and make calculated sacrifices of the available creatures in order to secure the overall Hydrant population and preserve the fruits of their hard labor.

Despite this idea of having expendable creatures of war, Shepherds reluctantly find themselves growing attached to a favorite or two of their cadre and will go out of their way to prevent the death of their favorite critters. This goes against their initial training and protocol, but Shepherds will come up with all sorts of clever excuses to disguise their reasoning and feelings. Under extreme pressure however, they will do what they feel they must, but this often leads to boiling frustration and channeled anger that is vented towards fellow Outriders, Packmasters and Falconers who do not share the same level of forced expectations and sacrifices.

Alignment: Any, but typically a good or selfish alignment.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 13, M.E. 14. A P.E. and P.P. 12 of higher is preferable, but not mandatory.

Attribute Bonuses: +2 to I.Q., +1D4 to P.S., + 1D6 P.P., and 1D4 to Spd.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to parry and dodge, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, and like the Packmaster, the Colonial Shepherd has a Bio-Comm surgically placed inside his skull that enables him to communicate with his cadre and others equipped with Bio-Comms. However, unlike the Packmaster and the gore pack, each of the Colonial Shepherd's cadre members has a biotech communication device called a "**Tapper**" installed into their cerebral cortex that the Colonial Shepherd uses to control the large insects. A Shepherd however, can immediately "adopt" new members to his cadre of War Ants by disconnecting an existing connection (automatically kills the ant being disconnected and causes 1D6 S.D.C. damage as a Bio-E feedback to the Shepherd). Once disconnected, however, the Shepherd can install a new Tapper into any newly encountered War Ant species, even if seen in the wild (as long as it is not already being controlled by another Shepherd) and recruit it into his personal cadre. Tapper devices have a range of 6 miles (9.6 km), but only works on War Ants. This device's limited capabilities will NEVER work on intelligent and more sophisticated creatures like Gorehounds, Black Talon War Hawks or other War Mounts.

Base S.D.C.: 24, plus any from Physical skills.

Common Skills: Standard.

O.C.C. Skill Programs: Basic Military (+20%), Biotechnology (+15%), Hunter/Trapper (+25%), Weapons Training (a specific program that includes W.P. Staff (+15%) and W.P. Shield (+20%), Infantryman (+10%).

Elective Skills: Select any one Wilderness skill and Bio-Comms (+15%) and four Elective Skills from the following list at first level. Select another two elective skills at levels 2,4, 8 and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any (+15%).

Espionage: Any (but +10% to Detect Ambush and Tracking only).

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any (+5% to most skills, but +15% to Surveillance).

Physical: Any.

Rogue: Gambling and Find Contraband only.

Science: Any (+5%).

Technical: Any.

Transportation: Any, except Pilot Wing packs and Host Armor Combat.

Wilderness Survival: Any (+10%).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character gets to select four Secondary Skills at level one and one additional skill at levels 3,6,9,12 and 15.

War Ants: The Colonial Shepherd begins with four War Ants at level one, and one additional War Ant at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14. Each War Ant can be Bio-Enhanced any way the character desires – he has 3D6+20 Bio-E available for each, plus another 1D8 Bio-E total per level of the character's experience to spend on one or more of the War Ants for additional enhancements. Slain War Ants are replaced with the basic creature with 3D6+10 Bio-E for enhancements.

M.D.C. "Commander" Body Armor: A special design of Chitin Living Body Armor specifically for the Colonial Shepherd. It has an extra 3D10 M.D.C. to the Main Body, 2D8 M.D.C. to the arms. 2D10 to each of the legs, and an extra 1D4x10 M.D.C. to the shoulders and neck area, plus a 2D8 M.D.C. serrated, three foot (0.9 m), circular shield on both forearms that are used in combat for defense and melee attacks. The helmet and faceplate has one large, central cyclops-like eye with three pairs of eyes on each side. Wasp-like antennas that serve as extra sensory equipment. The helmet's mouth piece protrudes forward and has 3 vented slits on both sides.

The character gets 1D20+10 Bio-E points for selections from Eyes and Vision, and/or other sensory Features. And 2D6+8 Bio-E for additional enhancements of choice, but is limited to the categories of Biological defenses, Flight Appendages and Offensive bio-weapons that do not require a mouth.

Standard Equipment: Colonial Shepherd Combat Shields (1D10 M.D.), Concussion Staff, (25) quarter-sized, spider-like Tappers, military fatigues, dress clothing, survival knife, utility belt, first aid kit, gas mask or face wrap, tinted goggles, hatchet for cutting wood, one light or heavy bio weapon of choice and one weapon for each W.P. with appropriate ammunition for heavy combat, a Red Sands modified Mega-Horse, tent, knapsack, backpack, four water skins, emergency food rations (3 weeks supply for the Colonial Shepherd and his current cadre before deployment) and some personal items.

Money: Has 1D6x100 credits in precious metals, relics or trade items, as well as 6D6x10 in available credits. Money can be spent now on additional equipment or saved for later.

The Upside: You control a decent sized army of expendable and easy to replenish soldiers that are extremely loyal to your every command. Despite their limited intelligence, these durable critters can pack a wonderful combined effect against opponents and your hard work and the fruits of your labor keep the House preserved.

The Downside: Similar to the Packmaster, you must rely on your cadre of War Ants to fulfill your role and help you survive. Unfortunately, your cadre must be given simple basic commands to function and thus your strategies and abilities to make sophisticated or independent adjustments or create new objectives will be based on how well you issue and control your insect cadre with basic commands and functions.

Experience Table: Same as the Packmaster O.C.C.

New Weapons & Enhancements for House of the Red Sands

Casting Blunderbuss

The House wanted a Casting weapon that provided considerable firepower in close-quarter situations, and the Blunderbuss was conceived. The Blunderbuss is a shotgun version of the Casting weapon, forgoing the burst ability for a more powerful one-shot capability.

The path to the Blunderbuss and the Cannon are mutually exclusive.

Important Note: This new casting weapon is an alternate path for enhancing the Casting Thrower as described on pages 99 & 100 of the Spicers RPG. When the player selects the Casting Thrower, they can either upgrade the thrower along the path as described in the Main Book, or they can select the Blunderbuss. Once they have chosen a path, they cannot then change the path of the weapon. If a player wishes to have both a Casting Rifle and a Blunderbuss, they will have to purchase two Casting Throwers and enhance one to become a Rifle and the other to become a Blunderbuss.

The Blunderbuss is a stand-alone weapon. What this means is that it isn't like the Casting Thrower, which can be grown into the Launcher, to then the Rifle, and finally, the Cannon.

The House is working on an enhancement for the Blunderbuss, enabling it to be grown into a Blunderbuss Cannon.

M.D.C. of Casting Blunderbuss: 1D6x10+20 M.D.C.

The barrel can be positioned on the forearm or shoulder, and is one foot (0.3 m) in length.

Mega-Damage: 1D10x10 +8 M.D. (not including the bonus from Lithovore metabolism). The weapon was redesigned to produce a short-range, high damage attack.

Rate of Fire: Each single shot counts as one melee attack. This weapon cannot fire bursts.

Maximum Effective Range: 50 feet (15.2 m). **Note:** Omni-Upgrade cannot be selected, but the range can be increased one time by 10 feet (3 m) for 15 Bio-E.

Bonus: +3 to strike, due to the sheer inability to miss a target that is in range. This weapon cannot be aimed.

Prerequisites: Casting Thrower.

Bio-E Cost: 35

Payload: 12 shots, payload is automatically reloaded after each meal.

Light Cell Laser Cannon

A larger version of the Light Cell Laser Rifle, it can be a weapon incorporated into a War Mount, Host Armor, or Biotic; or it can be a handheld weapon.

Weight: 24 lbs (11 kg).

M.D.C. of Light Cell Laser Cannon: 1D4x10+15 M.D.C.

Mega-Damage: Two Settings; a light 4D8 M.D. blast, or a heavy 2D4x10 +5 M.D. blast.

S.D.C. Damage: Special Damage Setting: 1D10x10 S.D.C. per blast, or a harmless beam of pure white light.

Maximum Effective Range: 3,035 feet (925 m).

Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as one melee attack/action but due to the amount of energy required for each shot, if you set the Cannon for the Heavy blast, it can only fire every alternate attack, requiring a minimum of at least one action/attack between shots. So if a character has five attacks per melee, they could fire the cannon, on their first, third and fifth shots in the first melee round, and then the second and fourth in the second melee round.

Bio-E: 30 for a handheld weapon, and 40 if incorporated into a Host Armor, War Mount or Biotic.

Payload: Effectively unlimited, since these are energy based weapons.

Bonus: +2 to strike.

Black Market Trade Value: 35,000 credits. The House of Red Sands does not trade its latest technology with anyone. However, those who kill a Red Sands warrior and takes their Biotech weapons or equipment, can trade them on the Black Market.

New Sensory Enhancement

Telescopic Vision (Multiple eyelids)

The membranes seen incorporated into the eyes of reptiles, cats and sharks are known as Nictitating Membranes. This membrane has been modified to act like a lens, enabling any with this enhancement to see a lot further than the one mile (1.6 km) provided by the Advanced Sight enhancement.

Only two of these membranes can be incorporated into the eye. Each membrane increases the visual range by half a mile (804 m) with crystal clarity. Therefore, the maximum visual range is increased from one mile (1.6 km) to 1.5 miles (2.4 km) & then two miles (3.2 km) with a second membrane. **Note:** While either one or two membranes are engaged, the creature or individual cannot focus on anything within a radius of half a mile (804 m) around itself, as they appear as blurs. Maximum is two membranes per eye, anything added beyond that blurs the entire vision.

Bio-E Cost: 10 for each level of enhancement for one pair of eyes. That means 20 Bio-E is required if you wish one pair of eyes to have a visual range of 3.2 km.

Prerequisites: Advanced Eyes.

New Physical Enhancements

Decreased Metabolic Rate

This feature makes the Host Armor or War Mount's metabolism slower, allowing it to burn through its food much longer and to add weight to its bulk to feed off of for longer durations and lower daily food requirements. Those with a Decreased Metabolic Rate are slightly slower, calmer and like to rest and be still. They tend to be patient, observing and noticing numerous details that other's might overlook or dismiss.

Bonuses: Extended food requirements (instead of feeding daily it only needs to eat every 3 days to perform), Extended Lifespan, and increased M.D.C.

Bio-E Cost: 30 points.

Prerequisite: The Host Armor or War Mount must be a Carnivore, Herbivore or Omnivore (no other metabolisms can have this feature).

Penalties: The Host Armor or War Mount is -1 attack per melee round and -1 on initiative unless it is waiting to ambush its target. Also reduce Spd by 5%.

Bonus: +1 on all Perception Rolls when lying in wait or quietly observing.

Dry Muscle

Life's absolute necessity upon water, whilst living in an environment where there is a nearly complete absence of water, is a stark contrast. Surviving in such a harsh environment required a serious tackling of that dilemma. And one question led to the creation of this fundamental enhancement, "What if life didn't need as much water?"

To tackle the need for water in a lot of their designs, the Librarians of the House looked at redesigning the skeletal muscle for their Host Armor, War Mounts and Biotics.

Quick Anatomy Lesson: A normal skeletal muscle is roughly 70% water & 30% protein. When a signal is sent to a muscle to tell it to contract, the electrical signal (in the nerve) is then propagated through (within) the muscle chemically.

In Dry Muscles, the contractile proteins have been modified to work on electrical signals not chemical.

The water has been completely removed and replaced with a liquid fat that acts as a lubricant for the contractile protein (much like how motor oil lubricates pistons in an engine).

This overall volume comparison from the original muscle to the Dry Muscle, is that Dry Muscle has 25% less in volume. So if a skeletal muscle has a volume of one liter, a Dry Muscle equivalent is a volume of 750 ml.

The weight of the Dry Muscle is also reduced compared to the original skeletal muscle as fat weighs less than water.

This enhancement seriously reduces the need for water for House of the Red Sands Host Armor, Biotics & War Mounts.

If you could witness the process of a human becoming a Xeric Guard Biotic, it is quite disturbing, as the individual is flayed, and one by one, their muscles are dissolved off the body to be reclaimed by the Gene Pool medium and the new dry muscles are attached.

Requirements: None.

Penalties: This muscle finds it difficult to function in arctic temperatures (below zero degrees Celsius); the liquid fat becomes exceedingly more viscous and seriously affects the contractility of the muscles, therefore affecting strength, endurance, speed and prowess. In temperatures between 40-54 degrees Fahrenheit, the Host Armor or War Mount is sluggish: Reduce running speed by 20%, -1 attack per melee round, -2 on initiative, and -1 to dodge. In temperatures under 39 degrees Fahrenheit, reduce running speed by half, -2 attacks per melee round, and reduce all combat bonuses by half. Any feat that requires strenuous efforts or endurance also suffers (-2 to the P.S. or P.E. attribute, until the Host Armor or War Mount is exposed to temperatures of 40 degrees or higher for 1D4+2 hours.

For the dry muscles to function properly in such conditions, they need to be insulated against the cold. Much like an engine needs to be serviced regularly and have its oil replaced, the liquid fat needs to be cleaned to keep the muscles operating at optimal levels. Roughly once a month (28 + 1D4 days), the Host Armor, Biotic or War Mount is required to go through this process.

An organ similar to a kidney has been incorporated into the designs of their war machines to process the liquid fat. This is an automatic process for the Host Armor/ War Mount/ Biotic. All Dreadguards and Outriders are given notification (through a sophisticated sensory system that monitors the muscles) that the process will be required within 3+1D4 days. When the process begins, follow the list below for how long the process will take.

For Biotics it takes 2 hours plus 1D4x30 minutes.

For War Hawks it is 1 hour +1D4x15 minutes.

For Gorehounds and Hydrants it takes 3 hours +1D8x30 min.

For Molok & Nova Hawks it takes 5 hours +2D8x15 min.

For the Desert Judge it takes 9 hours +3D8x30 min.

For the Desert Rose, 1D4 weeks.

The process can occur while the creature is sleeping, so it is a common practice for them to get some rest during the process.

During the process, the Splicers creation is completely vulnerable (like a crab shedding its shell) as its muscles are focused on purging the dirty fat, while the body is processing (filtering) the fat. For the allocated time as stated above, the creation loses initiative, half of their attacks, their combat capabilities are reduced to +2 to strike, parry and dodge, and they lose any automatic dodge or parry ability. They cannot run nor swim (only tread water) nor climb or perform any acrobatic skills.

Bio-E Cost: Besides the Xeric Guard, this enhancement is incorporated into the DNA template of the Host Armors and War Mounts of the house.

It would be too difficult to replace the muscles of Host Armor & War Mounts that have already left the Gene-Pools. But for Biotics it can be achieved; the muscles are simply removed one at a time and the new muscle is positioned.

It should cost 50 Bio-E for the enhancement. The replacement of the muscles is also a time-consuming process, taking 22 + 2D4 hours for human-sized subjects.

Bonuses: Because the muscles are closed systems and operate solely on signals from the nervous system, and they are full of a lubricating liquid fat and not water, it reduces the requirement for food and water needed for survival.

Sometimes the process can be a hindrance for those out in the field during long-term reconnaissance missions, or just needed to be done at the worst time, so the process can be delayed, but at a cost.

When the pilot or rider is given the notification (3+1D4 days) of when the process is going to occur – which is a set time once the die is rolled – the rider/pilot can *inhibit* the process. For every day past the point the process was supposed to occur (muscles not being filtered), the War Mount/Host Armor loses initiative entirely, -1 to strike parry and dodge, loses any automatic abilities to dodge or parry, -1 attack per melee round, reduce speed by 10%, and reduce P.E., P.S. and P.P. by one point. The process can be continued to be delayed for a maximum of 7 days before the body goes into a kind of forced, auto-purge. When this happens it collapses where it is, and cannot do anything, not even defend itself, for one third of the time required to process the fat.

Sand Feet

This new enhancement changes and augments the shape of the foot. The toes are elongated, wider and broader with pads of fat, similar to the feet of a camel. This enables the War Mount or Host Armor to move at 70-75% of their maximum speed when running on the soft, collapsible sand of the desert.

Cost: 10 Bio-E Points.

Prerequisite: None.

Water Retention Altered Physiology (Osmo-regulatory system)

Any Biotech creation among Red Sands that are carnivorous or omnivores are modeled similar to the nature of the desert-dwelling North West African Cheetah. This amazing desert feline gets most of its water requirements from the prey it consumes, and avoids expending energy that evaporates the body's water during the hottest parts of the day. What this means is the Red Sands' carnivore Biotech creations do not drink the blood specifically, but when they eat fresh prey in large chunks (or whole), all the blood and fluids in the body are processed at the same time. So a Carnivore Host Armor or War Mount that feeds on a kill, produces a half gallon (1.9 liters) of water for every 10 lbs (4.5 kg) of fresh food it consumes. This is fed through a retractable straw tube, directly into the head compartment of the Host Armor or directly into the system if it is a War Mount or Biotic. This is crucial as Host Armors and War Mounts can go longer without water than humans and it is the pilot or pack leader who controls them that requires the water the most in the hot desert. This precious ability has enabled many Red Sanders to evade, outlast and outperform rival splicers in the unforgiving heat.

Bio-E Cost: 15 points.

Prerequisite: None.

Hints at Secrets Beneath the Dunes

The House is researching and experimenting with many new Splicer war machines and weapons. The Desert hides many dangers. It never reveals all. There are many creatures that no one has seen outside the members of the House that they are planning to reveal only when the united war begins... but their effect can be seen.

It is no secret that the House of Red Sands is indeed storing up for a major war with the machines. However, it is rumored from survivors, Red Sands deserters and possible spies hidden among the populace that the desert dwelling house may have crossed the line with the Resistance. It is said that these desert ghouls may be harboring Saints and Tormentors (see **The Rifter® #50**, pages 72-75) in a bizarre form of stasis or hibernation. Saints that are both denizens of the Red Sands, but more alarming, also Saints and Tormentors that belonged to other Great Houses of the Resistance that were kidnaped to build a growing cache of Biotech symbiotes. Rumors and legends speak of over several hundred cryo honeycomb-like cocoons containing Saints and Tormentors at a secret facility, and are being held until the prophetic days of the Final War against the Machine manifests. It is only in the final days that the people of the House of the Red Sands will rise up and awaken the dormitory-filled sleeping Saints and Tormentors so that they may mature and support the war efforts with their

sacrifices, and to help fuel the surplus of Biotech needed to defeat N.E.X.U.S.

It is one thing for the House of Red Sands to freeze their own volunteers for this plan, but legends and rumor has it that they are actively going out and kidnaping Saints from other Great Houses of the Resistance for the “greater good” of everyone. If true, this will not be tolerated by the other Houses and is one of the many reasons some Houses are beginning to deploying Scouting parties into the deserts in an effort to verify the Red Sands’ existence and whether they kidnaping Saints and others and subjecting them to this and other macabre experimentation. If found to be true, it is likely to result in the orchestration of a massive rescue mission by the Resistance. And possible retribution against the House of Red Sands. Anticipation of such actions might be one more reason why the Desert Rose is being created.

Quick Stats for Notable House of Red Sands People

Jigisha Kanta, Ustada of the Red Sands

Appearance: Long, flowing black hair, tanned skin, but concealed under flowing white garbs with a beautiful ceramic faceplate signature of the Ustad(a), covered with a transparent veil. Jigisha is fit and battle-hardened and has a build similar to an athletic swimmer.

Weight: 128 pounds (57.6 kg).

Height: 5 feet, 7 inches (1.7 m).

Age: 29. **Sex:** Female.

Experience Level: 7th level Dreadguard.

Jigisha’s “Rakshas” Dreadguard Host Armor

A sleek Demon-like anthromorphic tigress style of Host Armor. It is lavender in color with black stripes and a rose and white trim on its edges, along with highlights that gives the armor the appearance of an exotic, yet poisonous flower. It has four arms (two being large praying mantis style scythes), a segmented scorpion tail, Acidic Blood, Organic Thrusters, a Needle Death Blossom mohawk mane that goes down the head, neck and back, female breasts that conceal Omega Blasters, Four Pincer Saber Mandibles, shoulder mounted organic rockets, elongated legs, forearm mounted Tentacle Harpoon and Chameleon Skin.

The Imperial Swarm: Jigisha’s personal Swarm Lord Bodyguards are adorned in crimson colored Hive Armors and are always surrounding Jigisha wherever she travels within the haven (The Colony) or outside its walls. She always has 2D4 of Swarm Lords by her side (within 10 feet/3 m) at all times, even when sleeping, bathing and during her lovemaking. They protect her with a religious devotion to her and the Red Sands’ cause. They are relieved at various intervals ONLY by other Imperial Swarm Lords.

Notes on the Red Sands Librarians

Senior Librarian – Amoghavarsha. It was most of Amoghavarsha’s designs that allowed the House of Red Sands to survive and thrive in the harsh Icarus Desert. Some Ustad Council

members have implied that when the House decided to relocate to the Icarus Desert that it was largely based upon the prototype designs created by this Librarian and the dark policing and espionage tactics conducted by his Scarecrows that convinced the Council. Various council members and teachers that disagreed with Amoghavarsha’s suggestions, were challenged heavily in the political arena, but were also threatened and violently harassed. Their families inside the haven were also threatened, which pushed the necessary votes to the Librarian’s favor for the relocation. Many fear that the Librarian simply wanted to get the house out into an isolated area where they would be hidden, and far from the assistance of the Resistance. Putting the house closer and more vulnerable to Amoghavarsha’s unspoken agendas, if they weren’t cautious.

Second Librarian – Rema. Located at “The Compound”, (a secret outpost outside of the haven where captive Splicers undergo “rehabilitation”(mind probed and brain washed) by Rema to become spies and are released back into the world to covertly serve the House of Red Sands. There are future plans for an unnamed cult that will seek to evangelize about the unification of the Resistance, will be instituted by this network of spies and are being planted within multiple Great Houses.

Rema loves the experience of learning and gaining knowledge. Her implementation of the Eraser Ant drones to conceal the location of the Red Sands’ House was a clever way for the Librarian to expand her web of intelligence gathering. She is able to use her neural probe sabers and peruse through all of the juicy details and information obtained by these critters to the point that she gets borderline drunk from the excitement.

Rema is so enthused about obtaining new secrets that she has begun to explore the uncharted mysteries and abilities of being a Librarian, including secretly mating with both male Librarians whenever she visits The Colony. She enjoys pitting them against each other for amusement as they compete to please her and strive to win her heart.

Rumor has it that some of her closest Scarecrows helped preserve one of her darkest secrets. That she has been growing a Librarian progeny from her affairs, and that it has yet to hatch. Whispers among her Scarecrows abound with all sorts of scary descriptions of what this child will look like, be capable of or what it may try to do once it is awakened.

Junior Librarian – Maharaja – The youngest but most risk taking of the Librarians, Maharaja gets pleasure out of seeing his creations engage the Red Sands’ enemies on the battlefield. The librarian has a seething hatred towards the machine and relishes the thoughts and experiences of what his creations do on the battlefield against the mechanical menaces. He utilizes anyone he can probe as an entertaining bio-version of a television to study his adversaries and to find areas where he can make adjustments and improvements with his designs. Maharaja is obsessed with his designs and as always seeks to get a hand up on the Senior Librarian, Amoghavarsha, who is constantly joking and demeaning Maharaja’s designs and performances. Maharaja begged for the Desert Rose assignment and believes it will be his magnum opus that promotes his status in the house and places him as an equal to Amoghavarsha.

Ustada Jigisha uses the Librarian’s competitive rivalries to her advantage as it motivates the DNA crafters to make some of the best biotechnology to assist the Red Sands.

MASTERS UNLIMITED

A Villainous Organization & Adventure Ideas

Optional Material for Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Edition

By Paul Herbert

Introduction

From Skeletor to Megatron, Voldemort to the Godfather, villainous leaders have (literally, in some cases) an empire of followers, soldiers and hirelings to put their diabolic plans in motion. Most of these loyal subjects are just as nefarious as the masters they follow, and undertake each command with little or no remorse, like it is all a necessary part of their duties. Most are not part of a military, nor are they generally duped or coerced against their will. The actions they take are usually unjust and are recognized as such. These criminals seem like the ideal candidates for any underworld organization in need of loyal subjects. But are these subjects so loyal?

It has always played on my mind that in the storybooks, movies, comics and TV series, the villainous front line are often treated unfairly, brutally or cruelly, yet are not overly ruled by this fear. It's these cold-blooded killers, the ones who do the real dirty work, that I always had an issue with. Of course it may not make business sense to kill the top dog, but most of the guys operate on a "respect" commodity. Their honor or reputation is all they have. They trade on it and are frequently angered by acts of disrespect and quickly give in to bouts of rage with a mere minor insult. It is the nature of their beast. Basically, these guys are badass!

So why aren't there more coups?

Masters Unlimited is a relatively new underworld organization where the self-indulgent leader seems blissfully unaware that most of his "generals" not only have the power and wits to overthrow him, but are actively planning to do so! The only thing stopping their plans? Each other! This article plays on all aspects of Masters Unlimited. From the would-be kings mentioned above, to the Warren Masters' ability to wield any super powers or magic the G.M. wishes to include in their campaign, to the true source of the Masters' own powers...

Dangerous Underlings

The leaders amongst Masters Unlimited's ranks are: Verdict, Major Powell, Merlock, and Battleship (and Daisho, although the Masters' bodyguard(s) is completely loyal by his pledge of honor). Verdict is a cold, cunning psychic lawyer who plays cat and mouse games for fun. Major Grant Powell is a natural leader who does not enjoy taking orders from anyone and is recruiting an army of followers loyal to him. If it wasn't for the fact that Powell's super ability is dependent on a magical concoction that can only be concocted by Merlock he would have already begun his own rebellion. Merlock, the immortal golem is a valued asset to the Masters and is responsible for the numerous magical artifacts he possesses as well as the source of the Major's powers. Already being such an integral part of this criminal organization, it would seem like he already has it all. Except the ancient wizard is more arrogant than ever and will not be satisfied until he is the one on top! Battleship is the lesser of these threats but is fueled by anger and betrayal at being

demoted within the ranks, dismissed like any other minion instead of the friend he once was.

How or when any of these coups come to pass is left to the G.M., but their manner should be considered. The militant Powell would attempt an all-out onslaught to take out Daisho and assassinate Warren Masters at the best strategic opportunity whether in public or not. Verdict, on the other hand, wishes to enjoy and savor any demise he will be orchestrating. Subtlety, trickery, and misdirection are his weapons of choice. Making the millionaire crime lord feel as though he's losing his mind, and certainly his control, is how this miscreant wishes to take his charge. Merlock is patient. Being immortal, he knows that timing is everything. The golem will wait until he has perfected his potion for use on himself (or possibly Battleship) and turn Major Powell's own army against him. Then he will attempt to play Verdict at his own game, and (because the golem is a tough opponent against most things, except psionics) he will turn Warren and Vernon against each other. Striking down the victor (more than likely Masters) at his weakest!

Each believes they will rule but none have considered two very serious obstacles in their plotting. Firstly, weakening the hierarchy of Masters Unlimited will bring about the attention of the other Masters Unlimited – the Opposing Crimelords in the Century Station turf war. One in particular, The Chrome Lord, is the organization's arch-nemesis and he will strike directly, swiftly and without honor or mercy as soon as he is aware of the opportunity. The other blind side to any coup is that in their arrogance they believe that a man so successful to have created great wealth in the business world and the underworld would not be aware of his own surroundings. Warren Masters is an intelligent man and he IS aware of the plots, or at least suspicious, of his seconds-in-command. He has many spies in many corners and is already preparing to combat each opponent's plans while learning their weaknesses, as well as planning to recruit suitable replacements. Verdict is the only one (through mind tampering) that he believes is not yet after his throne, but he knows it will not be long...

The Birth of a Super Villain

Warren Masters was born into money. His father ran and owned the company he had built from the ground up; Masters Ltd. Warren never took any interest in the family business and was more than happy living a playboy lifestyle off the back of his old man's hard work. Although he was a little pompous and incredibly conceited in his early twenties, he was still a charmer and surrounded himself with an entourage of "yes" people who laughed at his jokes and catered to every narcissistic desire. Warren spent a lot of time partying on the family yacht at various destinations around the world and due to this, when his father began to receive death threats from rival companies, he hired a bodyguard for his son: A mutant and former soldier who possessed *Underwater abilities* - Hector Sanchez.

Warren's father was right to have been worried, but he should have paid more attention to his own safety for he was murdered shortly afterwards (a case never officially solved). As everyone expected, all of the stocks had been left to the only son and heir and Warren inherited the Masters Ltd. chair. What happened next was the unexpected part of the competitions plan. As it turned out, the new kid on the block was actually a natural at business. Instead of failing the company and leading it to ruin, his leadership skills (although ruthless and cutthroat) were clearly needed as he shook up the company and the competition (with a little assistance from the family lawyer, Vernon Richards) and expanded his successes into a stable business model. Masters Ltd. now runs almost autonomously, allowing a pleasant mix of work hard and play hard for the successful millionaire. If only that were where the story ends...

During a particular all-night party on his yacht one summer, celebrating the latest in a long line of triumphs, the party-boy fell overboard and began to sink to his drunken death. His bodyguard, Sanchez, dived in to save him but did not do so! Before Hector got to his employer he had already been saved. Unknown to anyone (including Masters), a squid-like animal had swum to the drowning host and symbiotically attached itself to him, instantly unifying the two. The symbiote enabled Masters to breathe under the water and he safely swam back up to the surface. His mutant bodyguard surfaced minutes later. The symbiote was hidden from the partygoers and Masters retired to his room, too "shaken up" by the near death situation. A true statement but more so due to the frightening creature attached to his back! It instantly showed him the powers it bestowed, and within hours, the power-hungry man was overcome with more exuberance than fear.

However, as the weeks went on, Masters quickly got bored. His powers were particularly weak (see below). Changing clothes became tedious and he hadn't used a weapon in his life. After only a month or two, he had already lost interest in his "new toy." It was about this time that a new acquaintance of his, Merlock, approached with tales of legend. The immortal golem needed funds for his own schemes and in return promised to maximize the potential of his new powers. Since that time, through Merlock's research and with Masters' money, they have uncovered a number of ancient, magical artifacts, each one granting super abilities upon the possessor. With great power apparently comes great self-absorption, and Masters needed a focus for his tedium. Hardly being the altruistic gentleman and already having conquered the legitimate business world, Masters had only one avenue to pursue – the underworld.

Masters Unlimited

Warren's lawyer and confidant, Vernon Richards, was inevitably on board with this new venture as was the immortal, Merlock. Sanchez was reassigned to head of security (actually more of a demotion for his former friend) and Hector used his military contacts to acquire a small army of mercenaries as the forerunners of the operation including a former Major, Grant Powell, to lead them. Two (actually three) new faces were discovered that kept Masters safer than he'd ever been before (see Kat & Anna below). Creating pseudonyms for their new identities, Masters Unlimited was born.

Named for Masters' own large supply of enchanted objects endowing him with mastery over several aspects – including his favorite, gravity – it also gives a nod to his alter ego's family company, a move not exactly desired by the other members. This dangerous move linking the two organizations was a big risk but this double bluff has paid off. Most investigators believe that no one is truly

stupid enough to highlight the link if they were the head of both the legal and illegal enterprises. Unknown to Masters, there is one person who has suspicions, an unthreatening, pen-pushing police officer named Adam Hedges (see Visionary below).

Potential Masters

Masters (Current Master)

In the years of building up Masters Unlimited around the criminal underworld of Century Station (and beyond), Masters has acquired over a half dozen more enchanted objects which he uses with his *Instant Wardrobe* power to toggle between the costume and the object. As each one is so large as to be held in his hands, he can only use one at a time (psychologically, he likes his right hand to be unrestrained). He also uses his *Mask* ability from his symbiote to disguise his face, making sure that his true identity can never be revealed. The current Enchanted Objects owned and stored and their powers are:

- A human heart: *Blood Master*: Alter Physical Structure: Blood, Impervious to Poison.
- A meteorite rock: *Gravity Master*: Gravity Manipulation, +4 to P.S. attribute (gaining a +4 bonus to damage).
- A wooden wand: *Spell Master*: P.P.E.: 200, Spells; *See the invisible* (4), *Darkness* (6), *Mystic Alarm* (5), *Energy Bolt* (5), *Paralysis: Lesser* (5), *Magic Net* (7), *Multiple Image* (7), *Charm* (12), *Negate Magic* (30), *Wisps of Confusion* (40), *Mute* (50), *Speed of the Snail* (50), *Mystic Portal* (60), *Call Storms* (200), *Sanctuary* (1500), *Summon Greater Familiar* (580), Impervious to Magic (but reduce H.P. and S.D.C. by half).
- A large diamond: *Mirror Master*: Mirror Mastery, Invisibility at will (30 minute intervals).
- A Persian Hourglass: *Time Master*: Slow Motion Control, +4 to P.P. attribute (gaining an extra +2 to strike, parry and dodge).
- An Egyptian vase (Ka): Not revealed until needed: Multiple Lives (another type of unlimited masters!), +3 to save vs psionics.

Each Enchanted Object grants Masters +2 to save vs all magic and +40 S.D.C. in addition to the above. As he is level nine in game terms, Masters can therefore have up to nine outfits to interchange. Also, the wand can actually be classed as a weapon if desired (but will need a weapon to be held and swapped over).

Certain rumors have been brought to this power-hungry crime lord's attention of a mysterious hero from the World Wars era once known simply as *the White Knight*. It is believed by some that this super soldier gained his powers via a suit of mystical clothing, specifically a pair of boots, a belt, a cape, a helmet and a pair of gloves. All were bright white in color, indestructible and each bestowed their wearer with legendary super power. With these items united as one outfit, the White Knight was an unstoppable force and many say his heroics won the war. Afterwards, he simply faded into obscurity (killed?) but Merlock's research shows evidence that his garments may have been separated and dispersed, and are now in the hands of individual minor heroes and ready to be taken by force.

Masters spends most of his days on his mega-yacht in the bay of Century Station in total seclusion, thus allowing him freedom and privacy to run both his empires. His only visitors are his employees on either fronts or his supermodel girlfriend. The only time Warren Masters is out and about will involve a social occasion or party but as Gravity Master (or current pseudonym), Masters likes to be in the center of action and enjoys the thrill of the fight and to see his opponents crushed by his power.

Real Name: Warren Masters.
Alias: Currently Gregory Masters, if needed.
Alignment: Miscreant.
Hit Points: 78
S.D.C.: 61
Height: Tall.
Weight: Average.
Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 9, M.A. 14, P.S. 17, P.P. 18, P.E. 16, P.B. 16, Spd 24.
Birth Order: Illegitimate.
Age: 36
Disposition: Charismatic rogue who loves his dual manipulation of the media spotlight. Incredibly low attention span and he will lose interest rapidly.
Experience Level: 9
Attacks per Melee: 7
Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +2 to initiative, +4 to strike, +8 to parry, +8 to dodge, +3 to automatic dodge, +2 to damage, +2 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to disarm, Critical Strike on 18, 19 or 20. Kick Attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6), Wheel Kick (2D6), Body Flip/Throw, Paired Weapons.
Other Bonuses: +1 save vs poison, +4 save vs magic, +4% save vs coma, +2 save vs psionics. Charm/Impress 30%.
Super Power Category: Symbiotic Superhuman (plus powers from Enchanted Object(s)).
Symbiote: A.R. 10, S.D.C.: 36.
Symbiote Origins: Supernatural, from a different dimension.
Symbiote Appearance: Squid-like and linked to his spine on his back (-20% to P.B. if seen).
Symbiote Intelligence: Animal: low intelligence.
Symbiote Food Source: Life force.
Benefits Gained by Host: Can breathe in air, water or vacuum, Increased reflexes (included in bonuses), Impervious to possession, resistant to magic (included in bonuses).
Super Abilities: (Involving concealment); Dimensional Room, Instant wardrobe, Instant weapon, Mask.
Education Level: Master's Degree (of course!).
Scholastic Skill Programs: Business, Computer, Criminal, Language.
Secondary Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Expert, few Physical skills.
Appearance: A handsome, well distinguished gentleman with slicked hair and a trimmed "goatee" beard.
Occupation: CEO/Owner of Masters Ltd and Head of Masters Unlimited.
Weapons: Has five instant weapon dimensions. They are all primed and fully loaded with: Two 9mm pistols (3D6); Two 10mm Pistols (4D6); One 5.56mm Rifle (5D6); One two-handed flail (2D6) (no W.P.); Two jars of liquid nitroglycerine (1D4x10).
Body Armor: None.
Vehicles: A Mega-Yacht, as well as a large collection of automobiles and sports cars. He even has a helicopter stationed on the yacht which is his preferred method of travel.
Equipment: None specifically, but he is a playboy millionaire.
Available Money: Too many zeroes to list it all. Masters does spend a lot of his income on his endeavors into the criminal underworld, seeking lost magical artifacts as well as funding his lifestyle, legitimate business and Merlock's experiments. It would not take much for a billionaire with the right connections and drive to actually financially cripple this tycoon. That is of course, if he can stay alive long enough.

Battleship

Before the turn of the criminal tide for Masters, Battleship was always his trusted bodyguard. He was a sworn protector who'd proven his worth time and time again. He was held in high esteem and respected (and treated) like a friend. But circumstances change just like the tides. During Masters' near drowning incident, Battleship was inexcusably distracted from his responsibilities by the sight of a large gemstone glistening on an outcropping deep in the ocean's depths. Forsaking his duties, the mutant water baby gathered up the jewel, bringing it to the surface where his employer was surprisingly already waiting for him. By way of an apology and loyalty, Sanchez handed over what would later be known as the Golem's Heart to his forgiving boss. After a mere 48 hours, Masters was introduced to the powerful being named "Merlock" (see **Powers Unlimited® 2** for full details on the Immortal Power Category and the regeneration of an iron golem immortal).

Most would have felt the wrath of Masters. But in his forgiveness, Hector was merely reassigned. It was actually a hurtful emotion for Warren. He felt genuinely betrayed by Hector's lapse of loyalty. But, with Merlock's distractions and the introduction of Kat, Anna and Daisho, his new bodyguard(s), the hurt quickly faded into indifference. Now Battleship works as head of security for Masters Unlimited and in particular, Masters' own Mega-Yacht headquarters. From time to time he is still selected to do some ground work or assignment as deemed necessary and is viewed as little more than an expendable soldier.

Real Name: Hector Miguel Sanchez.

Alias: None.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Hit Points: 147

S.D.C.: 250

Height: Tall.

Weight: Very broad, and husky.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 9, M.A. 21, P.S. 40, P.P. 13, P.E. 29, P.B. 7, Spd 11.

Birth Order: Second Born.

Age: 28

Disposition: Serious, lone-wolf, generally angry and bitter at the world.

Experience Level: 10

Attacks per Melee: 8

Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +7 to initiative, +5 to strike, +8 to parry, +8 to dodge, +25 to damage, +2 to disarm, +3 to pull punch, +6 to roll with punch/fall/impact, Pin, Squeeze, Kick Attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6), Roundhouse Kick (3D6), Crescent Kick, Axe Kick, all Jump Kicks, Leap Attack, Body Flip/Throw, Critical Strike on 18, 19 or 20, Paired Weapons.

Other Bonuses: +7 save vs poison, +7 save vs magic, +28% save vs coma, Trust/Intimidate 65%.

Super Power Category: Mutant.

Cause of Mutation: Genetic aberration.

Unusual Physical Characteristics: Stocky.

Super Abilities: Extraordinary physical endurance, Extraordinary physical strength, Underwater abilities (underwater bonuses not added above), Radar, Energy Expulsion: Energy (+3/1 strike, 11D6 damage).

Education Level: Military Specialist.

Scholastic Skill Programs: Basic Military, Military Demolitions, Espionage, Pilot: Advanced, W.P. Modern Weapons.

Secondary Skills of Note: Physical skills.

Appearance: A huge, intimidating, walking mound of muscle.

Occupation: Head of Security for Masters Ltd.
Weapons: None (he doesn't need them).
Body Armor: None (believes he doesn't need any).
Vehicles: No personal vehicle, but access to any company vehicle.
Equipment: Wears his navy dog tags at all times.
Available Money: \$20,000.

Merlock

Not much is known about the mysterious Merlock. The immortal wizard easily bought the attention of Masters with his knowledge of the arcane, including the whereabouts of nearly a dozen mystical artifacts. Artifacts that Merlock swore to be genuine enchanted objects. Each one would grant him access to unbelievable powers, abilities and magic spellcasting. The mage played on Masters' greed and has stuck true to his word. With each expedition, he enables Masters to grow more powerful but also earns his trust.

With the resources and funds available through his collaboration with Masters, Merlock spends a lot of time conducting alchemical experiments. The most prominent of his successes resulted in a magical potion that empowers its drinker with super abilities. But alas, its effects are heinously limited. In fact, it only works on one individual – Major Powell. Bitter by this development and desperate to not be so greatly reliant on such a lowly mortal, the immortal spends the majority of his time working in his mystical laboratory (in a secret location on shore) in a fraught effort to expand the potion's influence to himself.

The motives of this powerful golem are unclear to all. For now, he is clearly the most powerful individual of Masters Unlimited, seeing Verdict as his greatest threat to ruling. Perhaps he too does not wish to be the organization's figurehead. He also has an extreme fondness for Battleship as he is the one to whom he owes his rescue and will be at his defense should Hector require a savior.

Real Name: Unknown.
Alias: The Warlock, Merlin, The Immortal Golem, Merlock; the Immortal.
Alignment: Anarchist.
Hit Points: Not applicable.
S.D.C.: 560
P.P.E.: 290
Height: 7 feet (2.1 m) tall.
Weight: Heavy (an iron golem weighs a lot).
Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 10, M.A. 14, P.S. 26 (Supernatural), P.P. 16, P.E. 18, P.B. 8, Spd 7.
Birth Order: Seventh Born.
Age: 1,500+ (?).
Disposition: Arrogant, cocky, self-assured. But he does restrain this arrogance around Masters and Verdict, pretending to consider them equals.
Experience Level: 8
Attacks per Melee: 5
Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +1 to initiative, +3 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +13 to damage, +8 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +3 to disarm, Critical Strike on 19 or 20. Kick Attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6), Body Flip/Throw.
Other Bonuses: +1 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 save vs poison, +2 save vs magic, +6% save vs coma.
Super Power Category: Immortal: Immortal Golem.
Special Abilities: Supernatural Strength (2D6, 4D6 or 1D6x10 (two attacks) +13 to damage). A.R.: 16, Regenerates 2D6 S.D.C. per melee, will regenerate fully in 48 hours unless reduced to -600

S.D.C., cold resistant, impervious to possession, poison, drugs, gases and disease.

Super Abilities: Wizard Supreme.

Spells: Cloud of Smoke (2), Globe of Daylight (2), See the Invisible (4), Befuddle (6), Darkness (6), Fear (5), Levitation (5), Mystic Alarm (5), Armor of Ithan (10), Energy Bolt (5), Paralysis: Lesser (5), Magic Net (7), Repel Animals (7), Multiple Image (7), Seal (7), Shadow Meld (10), Eyes of Thoth (8), Fly (15), Magic Pigeon (20), Mask of Deceit (15), Tongues (12), Wind Rush (20), Locate (30), Wisps of Confusion (40), Age (50), Monster Insect (50-100), Speed of the Snail (50), Swords to Snakes (50), Mystic Portal (60), Anti-Magic Cloud (140), Summon & Control Animals (125), Summon Fog (140), Calm Storm (200), Metamorphosis: Mist (250), Summon & Control Storm (260), Talisman (500), Sanctuary (1,500), Teleport: Superior (600).

Education Level: Immortal: True Alchemist.

Scholastic Skill Programs: Science & Technical skills.

Secondary Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Appearance: A tall, domineering, metallic golem. His body is made of iron which is unpolished and slightly rustic looking. He always wears a long, dark grey cloak with a large hood that he rarely cleans.

Occupation: Head of Research & Development for Masters Unlimited.

Weapons: The toys of mortals. Spells are his weapons.

Body Armor: None needed.

Vehicles: None. Never leaves the yacht and is chauffeured everywhere he would need to go.

Equipment: A library of occult research material including books, items, weapons and alchemical components (real and fake).

Available Money: \$1,000,000 in ready cash at any time (plus dozens of priceless artifacts to the right people, who Merlock knows).

Major Powell

This former army major was dishonorably discharged and served time for some scandalous war crimes. Legally freed by Masters Unlimited's very own lawyer, Vernon Richards, Powell was recruited to be the organization's front-line leader in all things operational. Masters does not care what "side-lines" the Major plays out for himself so long as they don't affect the main objectives. Grant enjoys his position and the free rein given to him, and does not intend to leave anytime soon. However, he holds little regard for Masters himself and is plotting to overthrow him as he commands the loyalty of the streets and the army he created within it.

His one Achilles heel is Merlock. The Wizard's concoction grants him the ability to empower others with super powers. Powell leads an onslaught of enhanced super-beings whenever they are on assignment. This unstoppable force has brought more success, more loyalty and of course, more willing recruits to his troops. Powell really is a force to be reckoned with and that force is growing at an alarming rate. But Merlock is the only one who knows how to make the necessary potion to imbue Major Powell's abilities. The potion itself has no effect on any other person, including Merlock himself. Without Merlock, Grant has no potion-without Powell, Merlock has a useless vial of liquid. This quid pro quo would seem like a mutually beneficial partnership. After all, both parties work for Masters Unlimited. However, both parties also wish to someday be the Master themselves and neither of them like sharing. In front of Masters they are cooperative but behind the scenes, their colleagueship is bitter, astringent and full of resentment. Now now, boys – play nice...

Real Name: Major Grant Powell.

Alias: The Major, Major Grant.
Alignment: Miscreant.
Hit Points: 71
S.D.C.: 102 (127 when imbued with Healing Factor).
Height: Below average.
Weight: Husky.
Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 17, M.A. 19, P.S. 22, P.P. 18, P.E. 16, P.B. 9, Spd 14.
Birth Order: Third Born.
Age: 40
Disposition: Mean, militant and unforgiving.
Experience Level: 7
Attacks per Melee: 6
Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +2 to initiative, +4 to strike, +10 to parry, +10 to dodge, +7 to damage, +2 to disarm, +3 to pull punch, +7 to roll with punch/fall/impact, Pin, Squeeze, Kick Attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6), Roundhouse Kick (3D6), Backward Sweep, Leg Hook, all Jump Kicks, Critical Strike on 18, 19 or 20, Paired Weapons.
Other Bonuses: +4 save vs poison, +4 save vs magic, +4 vs psionics, +1 save vs insanity, +24% save vs coma, +3 save vs power-altering abilities. Trust/Intimidate 55%.
Super Power Category: Imbued.
Nature of Imbuing Agent: Mystic: Magic Potion.
Addiction: Debilitating & Deadly.
Who Can Gain Super Abilities: Only Major Powell.
Who Can Make the Imbuing Agent: Only Merlock.
Duration of Each Dose: 60 minutes.
How Often Can Imbuing Agent be Taken: As desired.
Imbued Super Abilities: Grant Powers, Healing Factor.
Education Level: Military Specialist.
Scholastic Skill Programs: Basic Military, Military Demolitions, Espionage, Criminal, W.P. Modern Weapons.
Secondary Skills of Note: Physical skills.
Appearance: Stereotypical butch army officer with a crew cut and moustache. Always dressed in fatigues and body armor.
Occupation: Head of Underworld Operation for Masters Unlimited.
Weapons: M-16 automatic rifle (3D6), 9mm pistol (3D6), combat bush knife (1D6).
Body Armor: Half suit of hard armor vest: A.R.: 12, S.D.C.: 120.
Vehicles: Jeep.
Equipment: All manner of special military equipment from incendiaries to optics to surveillance gear and more.
Available Money: \$100,000 in ready cash at any given time.

Verdict

Of all Masters Unlimited associate members, there is none more evil than Vernon Richards. Some people are just born this way and unfortunately for Century Station (and perhaps the rest of the world), this one was born with high intelligence and powerful psionic abilities. There are few more cold, deviant, shrewd and manipulative than this criminal mastermind. From his early days, his calculated chosen profession was to be in law. From deep within the justice system he knew he could not only make millions but also pervert its course with no legal retaliation. His psionic abilities would win him every single case. He could get witnesses to say whatever he wanted, juries to vote however he wanted and judges to rule however he wanted. He was unbeatable, unstoppable and untouchable! It was perfect. It is perfect!

His alliance with Masters is for profit as well as mutual understanding. He respects all that Masters has accomplished and admires how he commands his troops in both societies without the use of mental psionics. Richards actually enjoys being part of the Masters

Unlimited group but it is a self-serving relationship. He is by no means overly loyal but he would be “disappointed” to see this criminal organization fall before he has had his fill of it and will therefore fight on their side until his life or freedom are truly threatened. Verdict has often considered taking over the reins from Masters but has recently taken the more subtle route of doing what he does best – manipulating people to do his bidding by guiding Masters to emboldened direct actions against his rivals such as “the Chrome Lord.” Why would he want to be the endangered figurehead when he can watch whatever unfolds from safer ringside seats? But if all goes well, he will increase his will and become the true Master Unlimited. It is all quite enthralling for this narcissistic control freak.

Real Name: Vernon Richards.

Alias: None.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Hit Points: 79

S.D.C.: 38

Height: Average.

Weight: Thin.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 23, M.A. 20, P.S. 12, P.P. 13, P.E. 14, P.B. 8, Spd 11.

Birth Order: Illegitimate.

Age: 39

Disposition: Cool, calm, controlled and calculating. A truly diabolic perversion of a man. Intent on his success in everything he does with no thought for any others. Everyone else are just his pawns to be manipulated and toyed with.

Experience Level: 11

Attacks per Melee: 6

Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +1 to initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +2 to damage, +4 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +1 to disarm. Kick Attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6), Body Flip/Throw, Critical Strike on 19 or 20.

Other Bonuses: +4 save vs psionics, +6 save vs insanity. Save vs psionics requires a 10 or higher. Trust/Intimidate 60%.

Super Power Category: Psionic.

I.S.P. 266

Psionics: Super: Bio-Manipulation, Empathic Transmission, Hypnotic Suggestion, Mental Illusion, Mentally Possess Others, Mind Block Auto-Defense, Mind Wipe, Telekinesis (Super).

Psionics: Minor: Sensitive: Clairvoyance, Empathy, Object Read, Presence Sense, See Aura, See the Invisible, Sense Evil, Sixth Sense, Speed Reading, Telepathy, Total Recall. **Physical:** Alter Aura, Deaden Senses, Death Trance, Ectoplasmic Disguise, Float, Impervious to Cold, Impervious to Fire, Impervious to Poison, Levitation, Nightvision, Summon Inner Strength, Telekinesis, Telekinetic Punch, Telekinetic Leap, Telekinetic Push, Teleport Object. **Healing:** Bio-Regeneration, Healing Touch.

Education Level: Master’s Degree.

Scholastic Skill Programs: Police/Law Enforcement, Business, Medical Investigation, Criminal.

Secondary Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Appearance: Tall, thin, spindly looking man with glasses who looks awkward even in a tailored suit. Looks can be more than deceiving though.

Occupation: Lawyer.

Weapons: None but carries a pouch of ball bearings to use as telekinetic bullets should he need them.

Body Armor: None.

Vehicles: Lamborghini, Jaguar and a BMW.

Equipment: None out of the ordinary.

Available Money: \$600,000.

Minions

Kat, Anna & Daisho

Katherine Zash is a minor celebrity, top model and owner of her own clothing brand, “Zash,” and current girlfriend to the millionaire playboy Gregory Masters. Annabelle Waki is neither rich nor famous. She works as a Personal Assistant for Gregory Masters and is legally employed by Masters Ltd. on a modest salary. It was inevitable that the two would meet eventually and upon the first encounter, both would say that they were inexplicably drawn to the other for no reason other than a “gut feeling.” That first meeting took place in Masters’ office aboard his yacht and the moment the two strangers shook hands, something supernatural occurred. The girls bizarrely merged, and in their place stood a large, Asian man – virtually the physical exact opposite of the two in every way! He introduced himself as Daisho and on his honor, swore to protect the loved one of his counterparts (Masters). This was an over-exaggerated gesture, as both ladies are fond of Masters but neither is in love with him. He’s a good boss and a pleasant companion, but both girls aren’t overly caring (see alignments) and love is a far too strong a word to use.

Nonetheless, Daisho’s oath was sworn and now Masters is rarely seen in public without his new bodyguard(s). Both women feel uncannily comfortable with their merger (in life and the physical one) as if it was all part of nature’s plan and was meant to be (perhaps it was). They are enjoying getting to know each other and see each other as a sister. During times of trouble, they have an unnatural intuition to work together to give Daisho his appearance. He is an overwhelming fighting force and has even begun to train his own disciples. The best chance any hero has to stop Daisho is to prevent Kat and Anna from ever making that physical contact.

Kat

Real Name: Katherine Zash.

Alias: Kat.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Hit Points: 38

S.D.C.: 59

P.P.E.: 46

Height: Tall.

Weight: Skinny.

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 9, M.A. 8, P.S. 10, P.P. 12, P.E. 13, P.B. 23, Spd 12.

Birth Order: Unknown.

Age: 24

Disposition: Sophisticated, sassy, witty and charming, a media delight. She is every man’s desire, every woman’s dream. Of course, behind the scenes she is a maniacal temptress who seeks only to rule Century Station at Master’s side.

Experience Level: 6

Attacks per Melee: 6

Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +1 to initiative, +1 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact. Kick Attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6), Critical Strike on 19 or 20.

Other Bonuses: Charm/Impress 65%.

Super Power Category: Gestalt: Physical Human.

Super Abilities: Merges with Anna to form *Daisho*!

Education Level: High School Graduate.

Scholastic Skill Programs: Physical, Pilot: Basic.

Secondary Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic, a few Physical skills to keep in shape.

Appearance: Tall, sleek and sexy. A stunning beauty with a breathtaking presence. Long, black (or blonde) hair, always perfectly styled.

Occupation: Supermodel and fashion brand owner.

Weapons: Anna.

Body Armor: None.

Vehicles: Sports car.

Equipment: None out of the ordinary (for a millionaire top model and trophy girlfriend).

Available Money: \$500,000+ of her own.

Anna

Real Name: Annabelle Waki.

Alias: Anna.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Hit Points: 38

S.D.C.: 26

P.P.E.: 26

Height: Short.

Weight: Skinny.

Attributes: I.Q. 18, M.E. 16, M.A. 17, P.S. 7, P.P. 11, P.E. 12, P.B. 15, Spd 12.

Birth Order: Unknown.

Age: 26

Disposition: Pretentious, selfish and arrogant. Outwardly she plays her part, but secretly she sees herself as being above everyone else, *well* above.

Experience Level: 6

Attacks per Melee: 5

Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +1 to initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to parry, +2 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact. Kick Attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6), Critical Strike on 19 or 20.

Other Bonuses: +1 save vs psionics, +1 save vs insanity. Trust 45%.

Super Power Category: Gestalt: Physical Human.

Super Abilities: Merges with Kat to form *Daisho*!

Education Level: Four years of college.

Scholastic Skill Programs: Business, Language, Science.

Secondary Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Appearance: Nerdy, but pretty. Short with long black hair (always tied back).

Occupation: Personal Assistant.

Weapons: Kat.

Body Armor: None.

Vehicles: Motorcycle.

Equipment: None out of the ordinary.

Available Money: \$20,000 of her own but she spends from Masters’ account for most things.

Daisho

Real Name: Not applicable.

Alias: Sensei.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Hit Points: 34 + Kat’s & Anna’s x4 = 338 total!

S.D.C.: 180 + Kat’s & Anna’s x4 = 526 total!

Height: Tall.

Weight: Husky.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 19, M.A. 20, P.S. 30 (Superhuman), P.P. 27, P.E. 28, P.B. 13, Spd 32.

Age: Not applicable.

Disposition: Mean and ruthless. Daisho will do whatever is necessary to take care of business.

Experience Level: 6

Attacks per Melee: 13

Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +6 to initiative, +7 to strike, +10 to parry, +10 to dodge, +15 to damage, +8 to pull punch, +7 to roll with punch/fall/impact. +6 to disarm, Back Flip 84%, Exceptional Balance 82%, Paired Weapons, +3 to automatic dodge. Punch (1D6), Power Punch (2D6+12, two attacks), Snap Kick (1D6), Kick Attack (2D4), Karate Kick (2D6+2), Jump Kick (Critical), Leap Attack (critical), Head Butt (1D6), Knockout/Stun on 19 or 20, Judo Throw (2D4 and dazed), Critical Strike on 19 or 20.

Other Bonuses: +8 save vs poison, +3 save vs disease, +7 save vs magic, +26% save vs coma, +2 save vs psionics, +2 save vs insanity, +4 save vs Horror Factor, +2 save vs possession and mind control. Trust/Intimidate 60%.

Super Power Category: Gestalt: Physical Human.

Who Forms the Gestalt: Majority rules.

Range to Other Member: Touch.

Who is in control: Mind of its own.

Super Abilities: Natural Combat Ability, Extraordinary Physical Prowess, Extraordinary Physical Endurance, Energy Fists (2D6 or 4D6, +1 to strike, not included above).

Education Level: Skills of its Gestalt members.

Secondary Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic, Physical skills (from members/Kat).

Appearance: Tall, muscular powerhouse. An Asian man with jet black hair, a long, thick handlebar moustache, barefooted and dressed in only martial art pants and a black belt.

Occupation: Combat Legend.

Weapons: Bare hands and feet. (**Note:** Neither Kat, Anna, nor Daisho actually use the Japanese daisho weapons. Their presence is in name only.)

Body Armor: As if!

Vehicles: None, but can pilot several types as per Kat's pilot program (G.M. discretion as to which types).

Equipment: None.

Available Money: None.

Shapeshift

Geoff Morfitt doesn't speak about his past to anyone and it is virtually impossible to dig up any dirt about him as he has had so many identities in his lifetime, all with such amazing believability. All that is known (based on Morfitt's outspoken hatred) is that he was the result of an experiment funded and directed by the *Chrome Lord*. Because of this bitterness, Geoff now works for Masters Unlimited. Shapeshift's powers are quite something. To put it bluntly, he can morph into virtually anything! Any person, any animal, any object (within certain size and mechanical limitations). His only drawback is that in darkness he glows faintly, ruining whatever disguise he has taken at that moment. Everyone has their Achilles heel and that is Shapeshift's.

He currently operates as a freelance thief, specializing in bank heists. When it comes to heists he truly is the master. As a frequent contractor for Masters Unlimited, he may well assist in times of need to keep these opportunities coming. Shapeshift would love to get his hands on Masters' symbiote if he ever found out about it. With the power of instant wardrobe he would surely be invincible! Maybe it's time for this master to pull off the ultimate heist...

Real Name: Geoff Morfitt.

Alias: None.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Hit Points: 33

S.D.C.: 40

Height: Short.

Weight: Thin.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 22, P.S. 10, P.P. 12, P.E. 9, P.B. 7, Spd 9.

Birth Order: Fourth Born.

Age: 25

Disposition: Paranoid, reclusive, quiet and shy.

Experience Level: 4

Attacks per Melee: 5

Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +2 to parry +2 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact. Kick Attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6).

Other Bonuses: +1 save vs disease. Trust/Intimidate 70%.

Super Power Category: Experiment.

Nature of the Experiment: Exposure to unknown quantity.

Type of Experiment: Unexpected side effect.

Side Effects: Whole body glows faintly in the dark.

Sponsoring Organization: Criminal.

Status with Organization: Ran away: Hunted by law enforcement and the organization.

Super Abilities: Shapechanger, Animal metamorphosis (All), Polymorph.

Education Level: Street Skills.

Scholastic Skill Programs: Street skills only.

Secondary Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Appearance: Unsure. Ugly, short, thin, man?

Occupation: Professional thief.

Weapons: Pistol (3D6). Rarely carries a weapon on a job as he uses his animal abilities to fight.

Body Armor: None (limits metamorphosis).

Vehicles: Whatever he can steal.

Equipment: None out of the ordinary.

Available Money: \$12,000.

Jawbreaker

This mutant is the definition of the saying "all brawn and no brains." He was different from the moment he was born and his undeserved parents gave him up for adoption as they struggled to love him for who he was. His treatment with the care system never got any better and he was never adopted. The other children taunted him and he would get into trouble for his reactions. Carson was also unfortunately not very bright. He was never appropriately diagnosed but he is borderline between being obtuse and actually having a clinical learning/processing issue. Whatever the case, Kiel is easily duped, manipulated and will obey anyone who shows him even an ounce of kindness or compassion. When his super abilities manifested in his teenage years, he was a prime choice for criminal tyrants all over Century Station. Alas, with Verdict's psionics and Masters showering him with gifts of gratitude and praise (tangible and verbal), a strong bond has already been formed. He now sees Masters as his one true (only) father figure.

Real Name: Carson Kiel.

Alias: Big Mouth.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Hit Points: 37

S.D.C.: 30

Height: Tall.

Weight: Husky.

Attributes: I.Q. 6, M.E. 6, M.A. 18, P.S. 19, P.P. 12, P.E. 15, P.B. 5, Spd 10.

Birth Order: Third Born.

Age: 20

Disposition: Duncie and childlike. He may possibly be mentally disabled but without a diagnosis. He takes orders as instructed by his Masters.

Experience Level: 4

Attacks per Melee: 5

Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +2 to parry, +2 to dodge, +4 to damage, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact. Kick Attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6).

Other Bonuses: Trust/Intimidate 50%.

Super Power Category: Mutant.

Cause of Mutation: Unknown, random element.

Unusual Physical Characteristics: Sharp teeth.

Super Abilities: Growth (see bonuses described on page 275 of HU2), Super Consumption (3D6 to 1D6x10 + P.S. damage depending on height).

Education Level: Street Skills.

Scholastic Skill Programs: Street skills only.

Secondary Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Appearance: Tall and broad. An extremely ugly unfortunate, resembling an ogre from fantasy legends.

Occupation: Thug for Masters Unlimited and often a bodyguard for Major Powell or Verdict.

Weapons: None.

Body Armor: None.

Vehicles: None (can't drive).

Equipment: None out of the ordinary.

Available Money: \$800.

Crystal

Gemma Stone used to be happy. She worked with her husband in their jewelry store and they lived a life of wedded bliss. Everything was sickeningly sweet for Gemma. That was, until the night the visitor came. To this day she is unsure who he was but he brought with him a rare, unknown crystal he had stolen from a laboratory where he worked, for her husband to examine. Whatever this crystal was she didn't like it. There was just something about it that made her uneasy and her intuition was unfortunately right. One fateful night whilst both worked late in the store, Gemma was polishing a ruby ring when it exploded! A blast of flame shot from it and set fire to the counter and quickly spread, setting alight everything in its path. She could hear the screams of her husband but couldn't see him for the smoke. Gemma got out though. In fact, she got out unhurt. Her clothes were burnt to mere shreds but she had no burns. No burns at all!

The police put it down to an insurance job gone wrong and Gemma not only got zero compensation but spent three years in the state penitentiary for her woes. It was during her time inside that she discovered she had inherited some mysterious powers which she rightly presumes were caused by that weird crystal. Due to her new abilities, she was moved to Gramercy Island after just 6 months. The death of her husband, the disintegration of not only her welfare but her life and the traumas she'd experienced inside with her powers and the other inmates, all took their toll on poor Gemma's psyche. After the three years she returned to Century Station a shadow of her former self. Now she was "Crystal!"

Crystal is a psychopath, a killer, vengeful and hate filled. She can be seen wearing eight brightly sparkling rings of a spectrum of colors. These are used to power her Gem abilities although

she still wears her engagement ring (a diamond) but would never dream of devaluing the sentimental gem to power her ability. Crystal is a hired agent for Masters Unlimited as her powers come in handy for tasks of thievery. Masters and Crystal have an amicably professional relationship and she is uncannily happy with her current employer. This is also due to Verdict. He uses Crystal's psychosis to manipulate her to work for him/Masters. He could however, easily implant the idea that Masters was responsible for the mystery object that caused her husband's death at any time he felt like it and use her against his current employer should he so wish.

Real Name: Gemma Stone.

Alias: None.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Hit Points: 52

S.D.C.: 74

Height: Average.

Weight: Thin.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 5, M.A. 16, P.S. 12 (26), P.P. 16, P.E. 17, P.B. 21, Spd 23.

Birth Order: First Born.

Age: 31

Disposition: Mean, bitter, vengeful. Psychotic to the extreme and will hunt anyone she believes is responsible for the murder of her husband.

Experience Level: 6

Attacks per Melee: 6

Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +1 to initiative, +2 to strike, +6 to parry, +6 to dodge, (+11 to damage), +2 to pull punch, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, Critical Strike on 19 or 20. Kick Attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6).

Other Bonuses: +1 save vs poison, +1 save vs magic, +5% save vs coma. Trust/Intimidate 40%, Charm/Impress 55%.

Super Power Category: Experiment.

Nature of the Experiment: Exposure to unknown quantity.

Type of Experiment: Accident.

Side Effects: Requires energy for nourishment (light).

Sponsoring Organization: Medical research facility.

Status with Organization: Left in the cold.

Super Abilities: APS: Crystal (A.R.: 16, S.D.C.: 500, shoot lasers for 3D6 damage), Gem Powers (wears seven rings, each with a large stone): *Agate*; Bio-Regeneration, *Amethyst*, Hypnotic Suggestion, *Aquamarine*, Underwater Abilities, *Diamond*; Invulnerability or Flight, *Emerald*; Invisibility, *Ruby*; Energy Expulsion: Fire, *Zircon*: Impervious to Fire.

Education Level: One Year of College.

Scholastic Skill Programs: Business Program, Criminal Program.

Secondary Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic, a few Physical skills.

Appearance: Blonde bombshell, from a distance. When up close, her crazed persona is obvious and detracts from her physical beauty.

Occupation: Freelance psychotic jewel thief.

Weapons: None.

Body Armor: None.

Vehicles: Corvette.

Equipment: Seven rings – one on each finger, each with a different stone (see abilities) – plus her engagement ring. (Actually it has a superior diamond but she would never power the stone unless forced. If she were ever forced then her vengeance would be unmerciful!)

Available Money: \$250,000.

Associated Heroes

Visionary

Adam Hedges used to be the ultimate police role-model. That was up until his life-changing accident. Hedges was out on patrol when he received a call for backup. Some detectives were pinned down surrounding what was believed to be a fencing racket involving a warehouse full of smuggled goods, the holdings of an organization known as "Masters Unlimited." He arrived at the scene in the middle of a full-scale firefight and was about to enter the warehouse when it exploded in front of him! In all honesty, the officer was lucky to be alive but when he awoke in hospital, he had completely lost his hearing. When he was fit to resume work he was limited to office work only. He was devastated, a broken man. As hard as he tried, there was little he could do to reverse his fate.

Adam had heard that when you lose one of your senses, often the others will begin to heighten in an attempt to compensate, and he would gradually find his eyesight had become more keen. He was able to take in his surroundings quicker and compute things out of the corner of his eyes. It was whilst he was wondering what was in his fridge that he could suddenly see the contents inside even though he hadn't opened the door yet that he realized this was no normal compensation. He was in fact blessed with Super Vision!

Still an upstanding, law-abiding citizen, Visionary has dedicated his time to investigating Masters Unlimited in every aspect. With every day however, he is becoming slightly more anarchistic in his pursuit of revenge and will eventually become blindly obsessed (no pun intended). He believes that Warren Masters is hiding behind the similarity of his legal company with this new underworld intruder and regularly has him under surveillance. Hedges has no real offensive powers and has thus far limited his actions to intelligence gathering only. However, since he obtained his newfound powers, Visionary has focused on revenge and has been improving his physique and combat skills.

Real Name: Adam Hedges.

Alias: Supersight (too telling?), Angel Eyes (too feminine?), Eye-Spy (too comical?), Seeman (too many innuendos?), Supervisor (too middle-management?).

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Hit Points: 35

S.D.C.: 76

Height: Average.

Weight: Average.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 21, M.A. 14, P.S. 18, P.P. 19, P.E. 17, P.B. 9, Spd 18.

Birth Order: Second Born.

Age: 32

Disposition: Driven, obsessed and a little psychotic since the accident.

Experience Level: 4

Attacks per Melee: 6

Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): -2/+2 to initiative (so +0 to initiative), +2 to strike, +8 to parry, +10 to dodge, +3 to damage, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, automatic dodge, W.P. Pistol.

Other Bonuses: +1 save vs poison, +1 save vs magic, +5% save vs coma, +3 save vs psionics, +4 save vs insanity.

Super Power Category: Empowered.

Physical Impairment: Stone deaf (penalties removed due to super abilities).

Emotional Inspiration: Victim of evil (Gravity Master).

Physical Compensation: Super abilities.

Super Abilities: Supervision: Angular vision, Supervision: Acute sight (allows full, comprehensive lip reading), Supervision: Circular vision (sees in all directions), Supervision: X-Ray, Supervision: Advanced sight, Supervision: Nightvision, Supervision: Thermal vision.

Education Level: Two Years of College.

Scholastic Skill Bonus: +10% (+15% then -5% on all skills).

Scholastic Skill Programs: Police/Law Enforcement, Journalist/Investigation.

Secondary Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Expert, Physical skills.

Appearance: Average. Average height, weight, looks. A very inconspicuous guy. Caucasian, black, unstyled hair, clean shaven, physically in shape.

Occupation: Former police detective.

Weapons: .38 Service-Six Ruger Revolver (2D6).

Body Armor: Point-blank vest A.R.: 10, S.D.C.: 70.

Vehicles: Full-sized sedan.

Equipment: None out of the ordinary.

Available Money: \$2,000.

Meg Jordan

"...this is Meg Jordan, bringing you the *News of the Century!*"

Meg is a well known face around Century Station as she is a front anchorwoman for WCTV Channel 9 News. She is a typical, hungry investigative reporter, eager for the next scoop. But during her time researching the shadowy underworld, she has seen, heard and bore witness to some of the most unscrupulous acts of villainy you could possibly imagine. When she inherited a simplistic looking white belt from her aunt she thought nothing of it at first and it sat, disused in a shoebox in the back of a cupboard for over two years. Until one day she needed a white belt for a dress at short notice and she suddenly remembered it. After some major mishaps pulling off doors, ripping her handbag and crushing her bathroom faucet, she realized that the belt had given her an incredible super strength worthy of the famous Centurions! She could finally do some good for the city and stop the crime instead of just reporting on the aftermath. Jordie (as she is known to her friends) is quite unaware how her aunt came to possess the magical object or why she chose to leave it to her in her will. She is even less aware that it is part of the legendary *White Knight's* costume or that Masters is searching for it.

Real Name: Megan Jordan.

Alias: Jordie (She is still working on a potential Super Heroine name that is better than *Miss Century*).

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Hit Points: 39

S.D.C.: 51 (91).

Height: Tall.

Weight: Thin.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 17, M.A. 17, P.S. 10 (56), P.P. 17, P.E. 17, P.B. 21, Spd 17.

Birth Order: First born.

Age: 22

Disposition: Curious to a fault. Stubborn and driven. Can seem a little cold externally but inside she's as caring as the next person.

Experience Level: 4

Attacks per Melee: 5

Combat Bonuses (including all bonuses): +2 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +4 to pull punch, +5 to roll with punch/fall/impact. Kick Attack (2D4), Snap Kick (1D6).

Other Bonuses: +1 save vs poison, +2 save vs magic, +4% save vs coma, +1 save vs psionics, +1 save vs insanity. Trust/Intimidate 45%, Charm/Impress 55%.

Super Power Category: Magic: Enchanted Object (Magical, thick, white belt).

Super Abilities: Supernatural Strength (5D6, 2D4x10 or 3D6x10 (two attacks), +41 to damage).

Other Abilities: +4 strength (included), +40 S.D.C. (included), +2 save vs all magic (see above).

Scholastic Skill Programs: Communications, Journalist/Investigation.

Secondary Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic, a few Physical skills.

Appearance: A brunette beauty, styled, with a clear face for television.

Occupation: Reporter for Century Station's WCTV Channel 9 News.

Weapons: Mace (see page 342 of HU2 for details).

Body Armor: None.

Vehicles: Sports car.

Equipment: Has "borrowed" the latest in video camera technology for WCTV including wireless surveillance microphones.

Available Money: \$800.

Hook, Line and Sinkers

Hook: During a nighttime patrol through the player characters' local neighborhood, the sounds of an all too familiar mugging can be heard nearby when someone screams in fright. As our rescuers approach the scene, they witness the aggressor shouting at their victim (a bruised and battered teenage boy) as the boys gym bag is strewn across the nearby area, "*Where is the other white glove?!*" (Depending on your character levels, I would recommend the attacker be Jawbreaker for low levels, Crystal for medium levels or Masters himself for higher levels.) The villain will then kill the boy and escape with a single white glove. That is of course dependent on whether or not our heroes can save him in time...

Line: The white gloves are the fabled magical items worn by the once great White Knight! If saved, the boy does not actually know anything about his attacker (he uses the white gloves for mime class) but one is missing. A quick search of their surroundings will discover the other glove nearby. The boy does not want the glove (he is unaware of their unique properties when worn as a pair) and does not want anyone coming after him again.

Visionary has been on one of his stake-outs and has witnessed the whole scenario. He will introduce himself to the player characters and tell them all he knows about Masters Unlimited and beseech them to aid him in bringing this fiend and his associates to justice.

Sinker: As long as the player characters hold on to the white Knight's enchanted glove, they are the sworn arch-nemesis of Masters Unlimited. If our heroes are not looking for Masters or his lackeys, then you can rest assured that he will be looking for them!

(The actual properties of the White Knight's gloves and other artifacts are left to the G.M.'s discretion.)

Hook: Deep in the Tibetan mountains, Merlock has discovered the location of a powerful ancient artifact believed to have the ability to "summon the four winds" (Control Elemental Force: Air?). However, the martial monks that live in the monastery where it is kept are not likely to barter for its sale.

Line: Indeed, the mystical globe does exist but it is not in the hands of peaceful monks. It is closely guarded by an ancient master and his clan of ninjas! These spiritual assassins keep the orb as a good luck symbol of stealth. They are extremely superstitious and would stop at nothing to ensure that it remains in their ownership. The artifact is located in a secure chamber deep in the mountain in a glass display cabinet, like one would find in a museum. However, If the players learn of this heist (from innocent Tibetan monks in need

of protection), when they spy the glass cabinet they will see that they are too late – it is empty!

Sinker: Did Shapeshift, Daisho, Powell or whoever Masters sent (including himself) get to the magical globe first? The answer is a simple no. In fact, they will think that the player characters got there before them. In truth however, the item is made up of the very wind it enables the wielder to control and although tangible, it is invisible to the naked eye. It is still held in the cabinet, safely and securely!

Hook: Following up from the hook, line & sinker above, the ninja clan has decided to relocate their prized possession for the time being. This temporary transfer has been discovered by Masters through his wide network of spies. It is up to the G.M. as to the method of transfer (land or sea) and to the location (inland China? India? Overseas, perhaps to the U.S.?). However, the player characters should be aware that it is certainly being escorted by a convoy of the ninja clan's elitist members!

Line: Masters Unlimited have sent Jawbreaker and Crystal this time to retrieve the clan's lucky charm as a full-on assault is the plan of action. The clan has spared no expense on the convoy with "the speedier the better" seemingly being their strategy. It also includes a helicopter scout and "eye in the sky" overseeing the whole trip! A surprise attack is unlikely. JawBreaker will instantly use his Growth powers for maximum effect "bite sized Porsche-ons!" out of the lead cars and eat the helicopters "like it's a chicken wing!" Has this big-mouth bitten off more than he can chew? (Ok, enough puns.) Crystal is prepared to use her full range of gem powers as the payload will easily compensate her for replenishment. With abilities such as Invulnerability, Invisibility, Flight and Energy Expulsion, she is a true cut above the rest (ok, just that one more pun, sorry!)

Sinker: After all the effort to retrieve this ancient magical artifact, the end result is only one of sheer frustration. For if the players or Masters Unlimited do finally retrieve the mystic orb, as wondrous as a tangible globe of wind/air is, it does not grant the wielder any special powers/abilities! Sorry, it really is just the ninjas' superstitious good luck charm!

Hook: Merlok has done it! The ancient alchemist has finally discovered the formula necessary to concoct a potion that will allow him to grant super powers! With no need for Major Powell and his own army of followers, it is time for this immortal to take his rightful place as leader of Masters Unlimited!

Line: Merlock's compassion for Battleship is evident by the fact that he will make his rescuer the main figurehead for the underworld organization and the two of them will surprise Powell and swiftly dispose of the unrequired soldier. The attack on Masters himself will be a surprise attack but a bold one at his civilian Masters Ltd. main offices. It will be swift and bloody but Merlock has no real interest in running a business (regardless of how much money it brings in). If he wants to buy something he simple takes it. Visionary may be present on one of his stakeouts.

Sinker: Verdict has learnt of the coup at the last minute but has managed to secretly replace Masters with Shapeshift just in time for the hypnotized decoy to take his place whilst Verdict and Masters escape! Still alive and his whereabouts unknown, there is plenty of time to plan his revenge and take back what is his empire...

Hook: Verdict tries to take control.

Line: Using his powerful psionics and manipulation, he uses Battleship and Crystal to take out Masters' bodyguards. Daisho and Jawbreaker are present on Warren's Mega-yacht to loyally defend their boss. However, Daisho is the only likely survivor of this battle (established in several playtests). Daisho/Masters stands triumphant

in the defense but Jawbreaker, Battleship, Crystal have met their end. Is Visionary present?

Sinker: Verdict is nowhere to be found but the absent Merlock is angered by Battleship's death and joins Masters in this personal vendetta. Using his magic, he will locate and assist in the capture of Richards.

Hook: Shapeshift and Verdict are captured by the players (perhaps just in time to prevent Vernon Richards' murder from the scenario above) and both are sentenced to life in Gramercy Island Penitentiary.

Line: Whilst being incarcerated, Verdict uses his mind-altering psionic powers and mentally persuades his guards that they have fitted him with Gramercy Island's special psionic dampeners. But in truth, they haven't!

Sinker: As part of his escape plan, Verdict hypnotizes Shapeshift to pose as him indefinitely whilst he makes his escape (uses his other psionics)! The escape is discovered but it will take a while before the Warden realizes that it is Verdict and not Shapeshift that is gone. In the meantime, Richards could be anywhere and will be plotting his revenge against those heroes that captured him...

Hook: Powell has had enough of playing second fiddle. Although he respects Masters' abilities and his proven track record,

it is time for a new leader. He has been stockpiling resources of the magical potion without Merlock's knowledge!

Line: The Major will use an army of minor villains to usurp Masters. He will orchestrate a full assault of Masters' Mega-Yacht whilst it is stationed in the Century Station docks. Whilst he is a skilled strategist and tactician, he is unable to fully utilize the powers of his army as their abilities are random and they will only be known at the time of the attack. Therefore, they have been given some free rein to use their own initiative (perhaps a mistake?). There will be a lot of news coverage of what is a supposed super-gang war! Is Jordie present?

Sinker: You would be forgiven for thinking that Merlock would intervene but he does not. Instead he simply walks away! Merlock will let Powell take control (should his onslaught win) but will refuse to provide any more of his mystical concoction. With no potion, ergo no powers, Grant's rule will collapse on itself.

Do not forget that if Masters "dies," his last action may be to use his "Ka" abilities and use up one of his lives! His revenge will be harsh, personal and direct to the powerless mortal. This is assuming that although he may regenerate, his alien symbiote may not realize and seek a new host in the meantime – what if the new host is Major Powell?

Rifts® Chaos Earth® Nebraska

Official setting and source material for Chaos Earth®

By Dan Frederick & Megan Timperley

Additional ideas and writing by Kevin Siembieda

Part One: Overview

Shadows over Omaha

Forty nine days into the apocalypse, Omaha, Nebraska *K9 Police Officer Buck Bauer* parked the once pristine white hover squad car with its sleek blue line painted horizontally across it on the ash-covered roadway. The only reason he knew Interstate 80 was even located here was the semi-operational transponder system still valiantly attempting to signal in the ash and mud splattered, hover car. The winds were stronger than usual, but the vehicle could handle it.

"The world was dead," he thought to himself, which made him wonder why he kept going out to look for survivors. For the last few weeks, Buck had been running insertion search and rescue operations into western Nebraska for those in charge back in Omaha. He wasn't the only one. There were others out here in this insane apocalyptic horror show making runs to find survivors and bringing them back to the emergency shelter at the old Offutt Air Force base. Only things were getting worse, not better.

Omaha was the largest city in Nebraska and said to be a haven in all of this, but it was in bad shape. A third of the population had converged on the old Offutt Air Force base. Thousands from other communities made their way to the base or to Omaha hoping to find shelter and protection. The base was already pushed beyond its limits. Still they were sending idiots like him, too stubborn to give up, out in this mess to bring in more.

"Crazy" Cade Williams and Dorothy "Dot" Hawken, neither of whom Buck would ever have ever dreamed of working with before the end of days, accompanied him on his quest. Officer Bauer knew about Crazy Cade from reputation. The man was likely insane. The

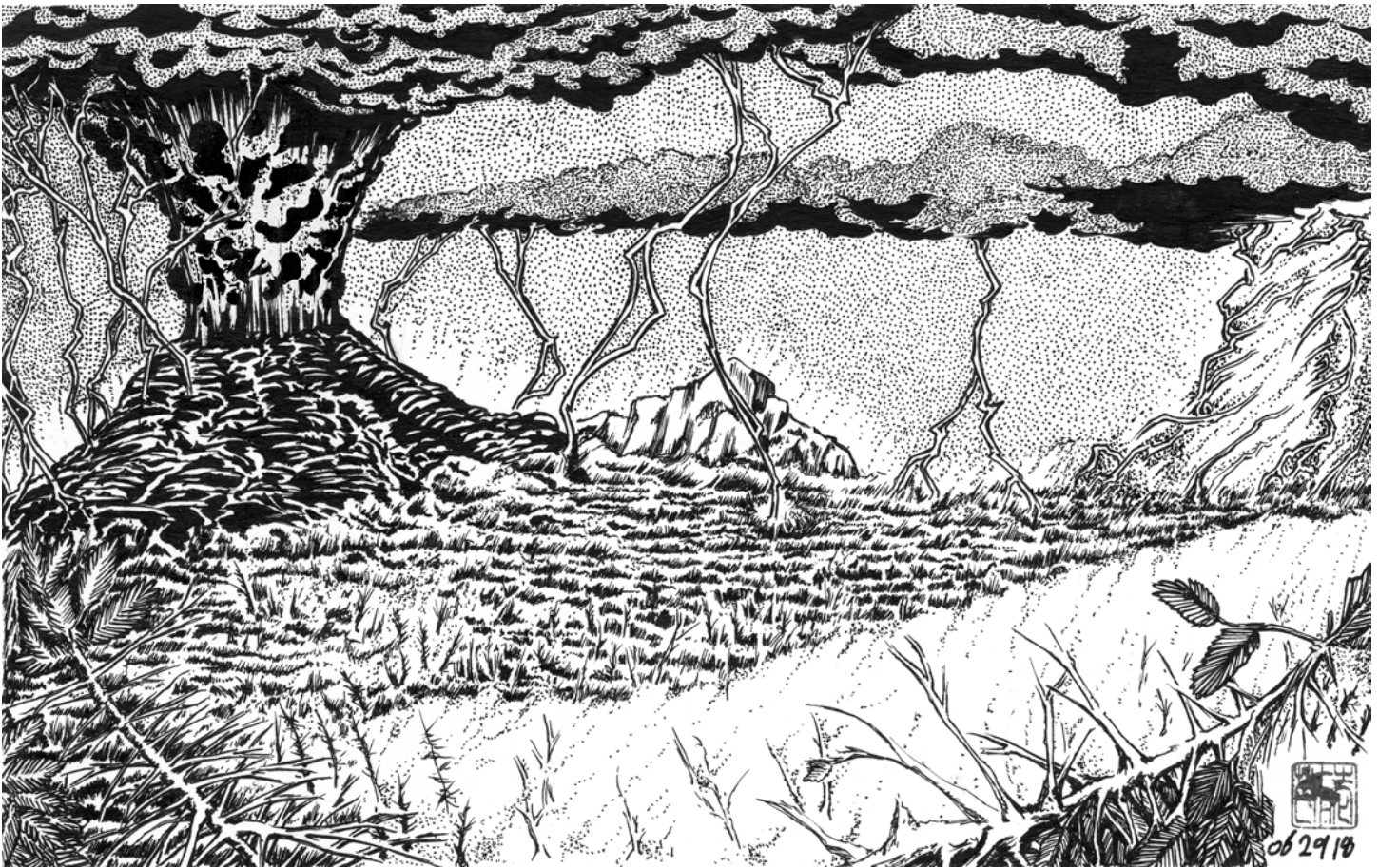
question of how much of his antics were just an act for the survivalist video broadcast he used to run, **Nebraskan Prepper!** was finally answered. None, it turned out. The man was certifiable. Crazy Cade had been the most popular and outrageous Prepper Buck had ever seen, and he was now Buck's unlikely partner, along with Dot. Cade's insane ideas were paying off though, and his knowledge of survival techniques was extensive and increasingly invaluable. Go figure.

Buck himself was a veteran police officer, with 20 years on the force, but even he was unsure which of his "teammates" frightened him more, Cade or Dot.

Until the Cataclysm, Dorothy had run a child care service with unorthodox practices that involved new age mumbo jumbo about healing crystals, power pyramids and other crap that nearly got her shut down more than once. Dot was an occultist and self-proclaimed Wiccan before the ... whatever this was, and attracted a particular clientele who were attracted to her "natural" methods. It was that knowledge that made her his partner now. It seems her crazy beliefs and insight to (Officer Bauer couldn't believe he was even thinking the word) – *magic* – had netted her tremendous results helping people in the new, mad world. More than that, she was one of the people they had heard about who had recently developed the ability to wield real magic and control fire. She wasn't the only one, either. It was terrifying. Dot, Cade. The volcanic eruptions. The ash clouds. The Blue Zones ... all of it. A fear that bubbles up into Buck's chest every time he looks into Dot's fiery eyes.

There it was.

Buck slowed down as they came up to the vehicle off to the side of the road. His two partners were out of the squad car before he could tell them he'd wait here, in the car. Cade and Dot both made their way carefully across the road buried in a foot and a half of ash



to a nearby crashed civilian hover sedan almost completely covered now in ash and mud. Buck had informed them he had checked on the sedan last week, but Dot insisted on checking it out again.

“In case some poor soul is hidden inside of it seeking shelter from a Blue Zone twister, or those demonic hopper creatures,” she insisted. Saying something about the vehicle’s power source could be used to keep someone warm and safe inside for weeks. Something about a vision or a dream and rescuing them before the storms got worst and more monsters came.

Yeah, there were weird storms and monsters nowadays. Another reason Buck questioned his own sanity for being out here. Miles from the safety of Omaha or Offutt. Still, if there was a chance of saving someone who could be in trouble, that was his job. And as much as he hated to admit it, the crazy witch ... Wiccan ... seemed to know things that were impossible to know. He had come to stop second-guessing her aloud after the family in McCook.

So why did he still resist listening to her and Crazy Cade? He couldn’t say. It just didn’t set right with him. The whole world had changed and gone crazy overnight. Buck couldn’t shake the feeling that this is how the dinosaurs must have felt when their time came. What did the scientists call it? Oh yeah, an extinction level event. They were fighting against their own extinction. On days like today, when the darkness set in on him, Buck felt numb and wondered if it was worth the effort.

The Cornhusker State had undergone such a dramatic change, and its shape was still shifting. Buck wondered if the rest of the world was as bad. He supposed it must be. No one had come seeking shelter from beyond the state. No one had come to help. The last communications received by his department from NEMA had been bleak and lacking much information. NEMA advised converging on Chicago, a feat which seemed daunting out here on the plains.

Buck, and many others, had opted for setting up a command base out of Omaha, with the help of the US Military there. Offutt Command seemed like a better place to hole up for now. Western Nebraska was under too much ash to survive, and countless untold horrors had awakened there. To the East, the restless Missouri river between Nebraska and Iowa had become undercut by rainstorms and the soft soil of its banks had washed away. Levees, bridges, and dams were all destroyed as a torrent of water, mud and debris crashed down upon them, enlarging the river and becoming the home to monstrous serpents.

Officer Bauer was shaken from his somber thoughts by the cynicism of Crazy Cade’s voice crackling over his radio. “If they are living in that gol’ darn death trap, they likely gonna die if we don’t fetch ‘em, damn fools.” grumbled Cade. “When society collapses you don’t want to have to rely on any technology, ‘cept maybe a nice set of sunglasses, a pair of goggles, a gasmask an’ a shotgun. Ain’t that right, Buckshot?”

Though they couldn’t see him through the snowing ash, Buck shrugged his shoulders in response as he repositioned the patrol vehicle closer to the crashed hover sedan and his two partners. Hearing anything outside of the patrol vehicle was difficult. The constant roar of the wind made his ears miss the quiet. The dry air, wailing winds blowing unrestrained across the empty grey landscape played hell with the senses. To Buck, a lingering loneliness hung in the atmosphere. Leaning back in his seat, he pulled out his canteen and took a swig. Somehow the lonely and empty expanse seemed more threatening than it had just six weeks ago when all of this started.

Returning the canteen to his hip, he unclipped the Scorpion .45 ACP pistol on his chest holster and pulled the five inch, blue steel handgun out. Keeping it at a low ready, Officer Bauer exited the vehicle and walked across the ashen roadway in the opposite direction of Dot and Cade.

Something was amiss.

He scanned the empty, flat horizon which seemed to fade off into a grey void of nothingness. Buck knew that Omaha was in the direction he was looking, but right now he could see nothing but the flittering flakes of ash that softly fell from the heavens like dirty snow. The violent and capricious sky, roiling with black clouds sparking with bolts of magic, seemed to be tenaciously attempting to blot out the sun. It was doing a good job of it. No one in Nebraska had seen the sun for almost two months.

All three of them wore air filtration masks and goggles or sunglasses. Anything to protect their eyes and keep the airways clear. Further West, the ash blanketed the world in eerie grey flakes and muffled silence. Buck had seen the undead fossils walking near the **Agate Fossil Beds**, and there were rumors they'd been seen up North by **Ashfall Fossil Bed**, too.

Last month, he saw for himself what the reports were talking about. He wasn't even sure what they were. Prehistoric plains demons is what he called them. Animated skeletons of what looked like dinosaurs and prehistoric mammals. Up ahead was something else. Though it was difficult to see anything clearly in the distance, through the ash, the horizon line seemed to be shifting. Today's ashfall was the lightest he had seen in weeks, so he could see for a distance of what he estimated to be two miles (3.2 km), maybe more.

His leg brushed something laying close to the surface of the ash. Dropping down to one knee Officer Bauer picked up a partially buried piece of what looked like metal. Oddly shaped and light, it had a greenish opal look to it.

Demon Hopper plating.

His chest tightened and his eyes darted back outwards across the plains. The plains States had always been plagued by grasshoppers and locust. The modern Golden Age insecticides had put an end to the locust. However, like a living vengeance, when the world was blown asunder, it unleashed creatures that the Cornhuskers had named "Demon Hoppers."

Where grasshoppers had once gnawed away at the stalks of corn, Demon Hoppers were monstrous, humanoid creatures that swarmed and ate everything organic in their path. Including people. Seeing a piece of the insectoid's armor plate on the ground made him wonder if more were in the area, and who it was that had killed this one. Then it struck him, could that undulating horizon be a swarm of Demon Hoppers. If so, they needed to leave. Now. Standing up, Officer Bauer started to back his way toward the patrol vehicle. He pointed his pistol out at the expanse in one hand as a guide to see if he could make out anything better on the horizon, and still held onto the bug plate armor in the other.

His mind ran through exit strategies. Demon Hoppers in front of them blocking their path back to Omaha to the east. Flooding waterways and undead monsters in the west. The strange Blue Zones that arced across the northern part of the state were equally uninviting. They brought about new paroxysms of violence every day. Light Twisters raged across the plains along the Blue Zones like highways of light inflamed with magic and crackling with energy. They unleashed storms, hail, armor-piercing ice, and countless new monsters onto the already blighted landscape. The bombardment of new and dangerous things unleashed from the opened Blue Zones were a horror show all their own. Even Dot said to avoid them, especially where they crossed each other. That left going south. For now.

Suddenly, the emotional numbness was gone. Officer Buck Bauer did not want to die. Much like Crazy Cade, Buck had a deep-rooted desire to live, even in this new hell on Earth. Dot was excited by this new world, and her newfound powers in it. She was determined to burn her way into a better future. Cade was, according to him,

prepared for the long haul to start a new society. A better-prepared society this time. Buck merely wanted to be there for the people of Omaha who needed a front-line warrior to serve and protect them. It was just who he was, before and now.

Once back at the Interceptor, Buck stopped and stole a glance behind him. There was Cade and Dot, and sure enough, the two were helping a woman in her thirties and a young child climb out from under the damaged hover sedan where they had taken refuge. It was going to be a tight fit, five of them and Kobe.

Kobe was by far the best Police Service Dog (PSD) Buck had ever worked with. PSDs could do what humans, and even robots could not. Other than his sense of duty, having Kobe with him had been the only good thing Buck had left. A small smile crept onto his weather-beaten and weary face. Saving two people, one of them a kid. That was a good thing. He should have known Dot would be right about that.

The blast that struck him knocked him backwards and with such force he dropped the weapon he was holding. The insectoid plate had slammed flat into his chest, bruising him but saving his life. Even as he fought the pain across his chest from the impact, a small part of Buck took stock that the insectoid plating had taken the brunt of the impact force, like high-tech NEMA armor would. He had just been hit by a military grade heavy energy weapon. Ion or plasma rifle was his guess. A blast that the normal police body armor he was wearing could have never stopped. Whereas the insect plating looked barely dinged. Holding onto this plating would be a good idea. Getting more of it even better. Provided he survived the day.

Emerging from dug out holes like trapdoor spiders, six armed people appeared, roughly sixty feet (18.3 m) away from the officer and about eighty feet (24 m) from the patrol vehicle. Weapons pointed at Buck. Officer Bauer recognized the logo they wore: **Lost Skeletons Citizens' Militia**. These fanatics were out of Lincoln, Nebraska, to the southeast. He had heard their numbers had grown and that they were raiding other cities. He also knew they were bad news. Really bad.

As if to punctuate his thoughts, the Lost Skeleton gunman who had shot him was a *Juicer*. He could tell by the exposed cabling along the outside of her limbs and the drug collar around her neck. He had a buddy who had joined the USA super-soldier project and had seen the Juicer harness up close, not just what you occasionally saw on the Internet. She had to be AWOL from a military unit. Probably the squad leader.

"We want what you got." said one of the gunmen. "You can start by tossing your pistol and belt over to me and stepping back. Do it nice and maybe we let y'all live today."

Unlikely, thought Officer Bauer.

Holding onto the armored bug plate with one hand, Buck reached up with the other to activate the throat mic that he and his teammates wore in order to talk at a distance: "Cade, get everyone in the car and drive. Go! Get away, now! Now!"

Buck and the Juicer had never unlocked gazes. He knew she was the real danger here. She knew it too.

The woman smiled, dropped her energy rifle and slid out a Vibro-Knife as she charged straight for him.

Buck tapped a button on his sleeve and the K9 door on the hover patrol vehicle popped open, letting Kobe out. As the police dog bolted out of the vehicle and raced towards Officer Bauer, so did the Juicer.

Behind him, Cade lifted the young child up into his arms and ran for the hover car. Dot motioned to the mother to run and then threw her hands up in the air, whispering a prayer to her goddess.

“Dammit, Buckshot, get in here, man!” screamed Crazy Cade as he dropped into the driver seat of the police hover car and rolled the girl into the front passenger seat next to him. The old man realized just how bad things must be if Buckshot wanted him to drive off. This police hover car was Buck’s third favorite thing in the world, after Kobe and saving lives. No way he would let him drive away, or anyone else, if Buckshot intended to make it out of this alive. Adjusting his sunglasses, Crazy Cade looked over at the frightened child.

“Seatbelt, young lady!”

The rear door opened and the child’s mother climbed inside, but Dorthy wasn’t with her.

Glancing out the window, Cade grumbled when he saw Dot slowly moving toward the patrol car. The woman was deep in concentration and waving her arms to the heavens. “And they call me crazy,” he muttered to himself. “Move it, Dorthy!” He shouted into the radio. “I mean it, Dot.”

Buck seemed to be frozen in place as the Juicer rushed toward him with the speed and ferocity of a freight train.

Suddenly, a storm of lava rained down on two of the five gunmen. Buck never flinched as he kept his eyes fixed on the Juicer hurling toward him. The two men screamed and no matter where they tried to dodge, the lava engulfed them until the two were consumed by it.

The three remaining assailants looked shocked and confused. Eyes to the sky, they looked around and braced for more falling lava. Safe for the moment, two of the three opened fire at Dot.

The Juicer was almost on top of Buck.

For a moment, Crazy Cade considered driving right into the gunmen, but thought better of it for the sake of his two terrified civilian occupants; one screaming in the back seat, the other crying in the front. Instead, he spun the squad car in a circle, making donuts and sending up a cloud of ash that concealed the vehicle and enveloped Dot. The last thing the old man saw was Dot, dressed in the urban fatigues the soldiers at Offutt had given her, suddenly being wrapped in a layer of flowing red hot lava and flames. If he had not seen her do this before, he might have feared for her life, but he knew it was magical armor appearing to protect herself from the gunfire.

Witnessing the lava storm, the one uncertain assailant vanished back down whatever hidey hole he had crawled out of. The other two turned to fire on the red glowing silhouette visible in the ash cloud.

A crackling, flaming whip burst out from the cloud at one of the shooters, and sliced him in half. The whip searing through his armor and his body like a hot knife through butter. His rifle fell from his twitching fingers as the gunman fell to the ground, cut into two halves, each on fire where they had been separated. Later, Dot would say she was glad the mother and child, and even Cade, did not see the fury she had to unleash.

The other gunman screamed and concentrated his fire on the elemental force moving toward him. Unlike Crazy Cade or Buck, the brigands had never seen a *Pyromancer* in action before. Shooting wild, not a single shot hit its target. As the lava-thing motioned to attack again – the ash swirling around her making it appear as if a firestorm were brewing – the man screamed, turned and ran for his life. Hearing his partner screaming and the sound of footsteps running, the other assailant scurried out of his hiding place and ran off behind him.

Buck heard the screams and gunfire, but he remained focused on his own problem: The Juicer.

Moving impossibly fast, she was almost on him in what seemed like four strides. A force of power like nothing he had ever seen before. In that moment, he feared his plan to reach for the gun holstered on his K9’s back and get off a shot before she reached him was a pipedream. He was moving in slow motion as a whirlwind of chemical fueled muscle and fury rushed at him with murder in her eyes.

With the ease of long practice, Kobe bolted past Officer Bauer close enough for Buck to pull the **MIP 21 Ion Pistol** from the harness worn by the K9. Kobe kept going and lunged into the Juicer, knocking her off balance and onto the ground 10 feet (3 m) from Buck. Both canine and super-soldier rolled in the ash and were back on their feet in a heartbeat. Buck surprised himself by getting off two blasts at the Juicer, but both went wide.

If the Juicer felt any pain as Kobe’s teeth sunk and tore into her wrist, she didn’t show it. The K9’s intention was to make the assailant drop the wicked Vibro-Knife she had unsheathed as she ran toward Officer Bauer. She enjoyed killing with a blade. It was much more visceral and satisfying.

The animal tried to pull and pin its opponent to the ground, face down, as it was trained to do, but the enhanced super-soldier was too much for the dog. All Kobe did was make her angry.

Buck watched in horror as the amazon grabbed his precious K9 companion with her free hand by the scruff of his neck, tear him from her wrist, and fling the dog through the air. Even with voices screaming at him on the radio, Buck heard Kobe’s thud as the animal hit the ground 20 feet (6.1 m) way. But the lawman didn’t turn to look. He kept his bead on the Juicer. He knew he had only one shot. And if Kobe had sacrificed his life for all of them, Buck had to make that shot count.

Just as she looked up and snarled at the police officer through gritted teeth, his ion blast struck the Juicer dead center between the eyes. It was a great shot. Buck could hardly believe it himself. Though he would like to think that it he was that good, he knew he had just made a one in a million shot. Pure luck. That’s okay. He’d take whatever luck he could muster.

The Juicer, half of her head vaporized from the Mega-Damage blast, staggered three steps forward like a chicken without its head, before dropping to her knees, and then toppled over onto the ground.

“Kobe. Kobe!” shouted Buck.

“There. At two o’clock.” It was Dot, back to normal, standing at his side and pointing.

They both ran to the dog. Favoring one leg, Kobe whimpered and hobbled over as best he could to greet them.

“Damn it! She broke Kobe’s leg.”

“Probably, his hip.” Said Dot. “But it might only be dislocated.”

Crazy Cade broke up the reunion as Buck swept the animal up in his arms. “Saw Legs, comin’!” shouted Cade over the radio. “This party is over people! Grab yer mutt and get inside the car, Buckshot. Do it in a hurry.”

Demon Hoppers. In the heat of combat, Buck had forgotten about the Demon Hoppers. A few advanced scouts ahead of the swarm were coming up on them fast. Dot and Buck hustled toward the open doors of the patrol vehicle that had just pulled up before them in a swirl of ash and the swosh of the hover jets. Kobe cradled in Buck’s arm’s licked his face as he put the dog inside as gently as possible.

Muffled screams not far from them broke thorough the falling ash and wind.

“Nice of them two bushwhackers to slow down the Saw Legs for us.” said Crazy Cade with a crooked grin.

“Which way, Buckshot?”

Buck was about to say South, but turned to Dorthy and asked, “What do you think, Dot?”

The Wiccan lifted her head up as if to sniff the air.

“Make it fast, lady.” grumbled Cade, still in the driver’s seat, ready to gun it.

“North.”

“Toward the Blue Zone? Are you sure?” Asked Buck.

“Yes, I’m sure.”

“Never doubt Dot when she’s sure, Buckshot.”

“North, then. Punch it.”

“Yassir. Don’t want to be nowhere near here when Hell arrives.”

State of Affairs in Nebraska, 2099

Chaos Earth is *the Apocalypse* and the definitive end of the Golden Age. Across the globe, billions of people perish in an instant, and many more suffer from the Earth being torn asunder by the return of magic and the Coming of the Rifts. This wave of death is just the first, followed by countless more. The people of the Golden Age witness their world violently devolve from a prosperous age of science and technological advancements, into a demon-infested, war-torn hell.

Player Characters must survive or die in this sudden collapse of society. Their entire world is turned upside down in a matter of minutes.

In North America, despite NEMA’s heroism and technology, the emergence of the Blue Zones (Ley Lines) has brought with them otherworldly demons and monsters. Every corner of the globe experiences their own private hell, all similar, but also each geographically unique. Every city, state, and country on Earth has its own particular trials to deal with.

In this article, we take a look at some of the people and things happening in the state of Nebraska, during the fall of humanity. In the initial hours of the Great Cataclysm, the **Yellowstone caldera** erupts with merciless fury, likely killing the President of the United States, who was sheltering in the *Cheyenne Mountain installation* located in Colorado. At 9:45 p.m., December 23, day two, magma erupts 20 miles (32 km) into the stratosphere, sulfur fills the air, rock, and lava and ash cascade down across the western United States. The President is never heard from again, and is presumed dead as the shifting **Great Barrier Mountains** erupt in a massive flux, transforming the Great Divide into something completely foreign and alien in nature.

The entire world feels the effects of this massive volcanic eruption, as well as many others. Global temperatures plummet freezing worldwide. This eruption at Yellowstone covers most of the Western half of the United States of America in a nearly un-survivable ash-fall. The rest of the country is affected as well, though not as severely. The shifting Great Barrier disperses some of the airborne ash through open dimensional portals.

Government leaders are gone in the conflagration. In less than 48 hours, the governments of the USA, Canada and Mexico are shattered and in complete disarray. The Presidents of the United States and Mexico, along with most of their respective government leaders, are missing in action. The Prime Minister of Canada is not, but even her strong presence does little to assuage the nightmare scenario or global Armageddon. Chaos reigns.

In the USA, the Pentagon, the Capitol, Congress and all of Washington D.C., along with most of the Eastern seaboard, are smashed and drowned by the angry Atlantic Ocean as it sends towering wall after wall of water pounding the coastal States (and Provinces of Canada) 50-100 miles (80 to 160 km) inland. It is surprising how

many buildings withstand the barrage, but when the Atlantic’s siege against humanity is over, 90% of the population has been washed out to sea. The government with it. Leaving behind instant ghost towns. The west coast fares even worse.

The military forces that manage to mobilize do so under the command of their local, base commanders. There are few, if any, members of high-command that have survived the initial onslaught. With communications down across the country due to weather, ash in the stratosphere and strange environmental phenomena, every base is pretty much on its own. Most try to execute disaster protocols, but disaster is everywhere and on a magnitude beyond comprehension. Not just on the North American continent, but on a global scale.

Under these circumstances, the best chance for survival is the mid-section of the continent, hence the decision to make Chicago, Illinois, one of the last major cities in the United States still known to be standing, and the surrounding region, the strategic location to make a stand. The exodus of military and NEMA personnel to the country’s heartland is joined by countless civilians grasping for any glimmer of hope.

NEMA

NEMA, the Northern Eagle Military Alliance, with its state of the art robots, vehicles and mobile medical facilities, is designed for disaster and defense operations, but even they are too few, and too far between to make a difference scattered across the North American continent. They and the three militaries of the USA, Canada and Mexico, decide to pool their resource at several strategic cities and locations. Most of NEMA in the USA recall its personnel to fall back to Chicago, and ordered them to essentially pull out of other areas.

The road traveled by the main NEMA forces is through the worst of what will become known as the **Magic Zone**. They are the first to encounter creatures that can only be described as monsters and demons.

NEMA personnel in the northwest, like Nebraska, have a comparatively clear and easy journey and come to Chicago largely unscathed. Crossing the Missouri River presenting the greatest obstacle with issues like swelling waters, bridges washed away and river serpents. They bring with them tales of ash drifting higher than houses, and a civilian casualty rate that seems staggeringly high until they learn of numbers from the East. There is no word from the west coast and the worst is feared.

Within the first few weeks of what would become known as the Great Cataclysm, NEMA separates into *six Commands* within the contiguous United States of America. This does not include NEMA commands in Canada and Mexico, both of whom have their own NEMA forces and are dealing with similar apocalyptic events. The whole world is. Not that there has been communication with countries outside North America. Each USA Command has its own disasters and challenges to struggle with during the Great Cataclysm.

Although Nebraska is part of the **Midwest Command of NEMA**, the majority of NEMA’s personnel has heeded the call to regroup in Chicago. They plan to establish a stronghold there and then come back to rescue others. This leaves most Nebraskans on their own to dig in and hunker down until they can return or other help can arrive. Other troops are going AWOL to find and rescue family and friends during the end of the world, thinning the ranks of the military, law enforcement, and other first responders even more.

Nebraska

Nebraska, on the edge of the super-volcano's survival zone, is nevertheless buried in anywhere from 3-10 feet (0.9 to 3 m) of the heavy volcanic byproduct. The deepest in the Western half of the state where wind creates ash mounds that resemble the rolling hills and sandy slopes of a desert.

Communities in the western half of Nebraska are hit the hardest. Those closest to the eruption of the Yellowstone super-volcano, are completely wiped out within a few hours. There the ash and snow is much deeper as if the skies are trying to cover the annihilation of what were once great cities. The ash and snow buries trapped survivors and collapses roofs and ceilings. The rubble and mounting depths of ash makes finding supplies nearly impossible and navigating anywhere difficult, as signs and landmarks are either gone or ash and snow covered. Vehicle engines are choked by the ash and airborne crud, making walking the only way in and out of these disaster zones. Those who can escape, head eastward in the ever-fading hope of finding a safe haven.

The authorities are dealing with cities under siege from natural disaster and mass destruction on an inconceivable magnitude. Moreover, dimensional incongruities, turbulent weather the likes of which have never been seen, fires, hysteria, riots, looting and creatures that can only be considered monsters all add to the nightmare. Stories and rumors abound of places that have it much worse than Nebraska, but it is hard to believe. Looking out of the window from the uncertain safety of your home or disaster relief center is like looking out into one of the circles of Hell.

Only a few cities like **Omaha** and **Lincoln**, and a few military bases like **Offutt Base** that have become refugee centers for the homeless, injured and frightened. Practically overnight, gangs emerge to take from the weak or fight to claim turf and resources. Those groups armed with weapons and survivalist skills quickly established footholds for their extremist or militant organizations. They, the government/NEMA, criminal gangs and civilian leaders work to either maintain some semblance of order or begin to carve out their own little kingdoms amid the widening chaos. Whether they know it or not in the beginning, each are rivals to the other and will clash. In the early weeks of the apocalypse, NEMA pretends and military operations follow protocols and conduct themselves as if there is a government and their nation still stands. However, as rumors spread that the government is gone and no city is unscathed by the holocaust, Nebraska (and everywhere else) becomes a land of chaos and lawlessness.

The NEMA forces that remain in Nebraska are joined by the Nebraska National Guard, local police, and volunteers who want to help and mean well, but they are all overwhelmed and stretched thin. Still do all they can to help the civilian population, from disaster relief operations to fighting against weird creatures and magical forces that seem like something out of a nightmare or summer disaster movie.

Offutt Air Base

Offutt air force base on the outskirts of Omaha, Nebraska, finds itself the focal point for survivors. Decentralized from the United States Air Command (SAC) during the centuries prior to the Coming of the Rifts, it had transformed from a purely Air Force base into a combination Air National Guard and experimental resources testing facility, producing bio-fuel and syngas (synthetic gas). The installation houses a small Air Force detachment that provides leadership and security to those assigned to the base. When all hell breaks loose, the assigned personnel at Offutt retained equipment

and the trained personnel of the United States military, and becomes the military power and government representatives in Nebraska.

The National Guard of Nebraska, suddenly activated under the auspices of NEMA, sees half of its forces ordered to head towards Chicago. The remaining half – prior to the Governor of Nebraska being ousted from office by the Civilian Militia calling itself **the Lost Skeletons** – was ordered by the elected Governor to converge on Lincoln and prepare to dig in. The Guard diverted to Offutt Air Force Base instead of the capital city of Lincoln when news of the governor's death becomes known and the change of power to the Lost Skeletons. They intend to recon the situation and then plan to take back the city of Lincoln from the Lost Skeletons.

These forces are joined by two companies of NEMA forces (231 troops).

The lack of ongoing dimensional turmoil and Rift activity in Eastern Nebraska makes the former Strategic Air Command at Offutt a natural choice for a base of operations and self-contained fortification. The actual base itself has sustained only mild damage from the initial cataclysm and subsequent ashfall. Its infrastructure remaining mostly intact and still powered by state of the art nuclear power cores and a new power source know as Project Argas. It was recently implemented at Offutt when its other duties were in the process of being closed down.

The Argas project utilizes a new, experimental Plasma Gasification (Incinerators) equipment to power the base. Plasma gasification is an extreme thermal process using plasma which converts organic matter into a synthesis gas (syngas) which is primarily made up of hydrogen and carbon monoxide. Basically, project Argas uses solid waste and advanced, new technologies to create power on par with nuclear systems. As fate would it, Argas was brought online without delay or incident just a few weeks before the global apocalypse, or the successful launch of the project would have been a celebrated success. Techs at Offutt, the military commanders there and the citizenry pouring to the base looking for help, made the decision to turn Offutt base into a survivors' refuge an easy one. They would stay behind where they were needed most, rather than try to traverse the ash-covered, demon-infested plains towards Chicago. Soon after, a company of NEMA peacekeepers would join them.

Omaha, Nebraska

The eastern Nebraska cities of Omaha and Lincoln withstand the crisis better many other locations. In this new time of chaos, Omaha, Lincoln, and Offutt Air Force Base, become beacons of hope in Nebraska and neighboring Iowa. So do the Native American tribal lands, though in a less obvious and much subtler basis. They and many cities and communities try to hold their own and help those they can. Each with different approaches and strategies for survival.

The city of Omaha, having neglecting to spend money on much-needed infrastructure upgrades over the last century, suffers greatly, even under only a foot of ash. Newer industrial buildings and privately owned commercial buildings fare well, however government and public buildings, including vast expanses of apartment complexes subsidized by local funds do not. Though Omaha was a booming city with a growing population, many of its structures barely meet code. Twenty percent of the city's buildings and bridges crumble under the initial earthquakes and shock waves. Another thirty percent collapse during the quakes and powerful storms that follow in the days that come. After one week, an estimated 58% of the population is dead or missing. Omaha, like most cities, is in ruins.

Offutt Air Force Base comes through much better that first week or two, with less than 5% casualties. As word spreads, many of

those who live within 100 miles (160 km) of the base head for Offutt and the city of Omaha believing they can find shelter, safety and emergency services there.

In the city of Omaha itself, a battalion of 540 National Guard and two platoons of NEMA peacekeepers (40 troops) from the **Offutt military base** are operating within the city. They strive to help and organize survivors and turn what's left of the city into a sustainable survivors' community. They have established triage and refugee centers, supply distribution centers, and protect the people as best they can. As you might expect, they struggle at keeping panic and lawlessness from spreading. Most days it feels like organized chaos.

These first responders are stretched thin and need the survivors to shake off their shock and fears and do for themselves and their neighbors.

Lincoln

Lincoln, State Capital of Nebraska, suffers a the same level of upheaval and destruction as Omaha and most Nebraskan communities. Here, 42% of the population is lost in the first week.

The city quickly falls into the hands of despot pro-human and anti-D-Bee fanatic Mark Graves and his gang of roughneck survivalists who call themselves the **Lost Skeletons Citizens' Militia**. He and his militia are determined to survive "by any means necessary" and begin to loot other cities and towns, hoard resources and rob rival camps including other survivors, the city of Omaha, the National Guard and NEMA! They also regard all nonhumans to be "alien invaders" and "monsters," slaughter them without mercy, and take anything of value they may have had. Though they claim their goal to save and protect lives, it is readily apparent that Mark Graves and his fanatical militia followers are making a power grab in the new world. Any survivors coming to Lincoln had better be prepared to follow orders and submit to the will of the Lost Skeletons.

Common knowledge and a source of pride to Cornhuskers was that Nebraska had years ago, constructed an underground bunker at the governor's mansion, and a large nerve center for government nicknamed the *underground capitol*, nearly two centuries before. This underground complex was updated regularly. After a flood scare a hundred years earlier, Lincoln had completely overhauled the space, and improved on its capabilities and capacities. The surviving government of Nebraska felt they would do just fine without NEMA's aid or soldiers. This feeling of independence and self-empowerment is encouraged by the leader of the Lost Skeletons Militia who now acts as self-appointed Governor of Nebraska.

Mark Graves was not the governor of Nebraska when hell arrived. His brother, Thomas Graves, was Governor and had held the position for three years. However, Mark implemented a coup, and has taken command of the remains of the government in the capital city of Lincoln.

As the local Lost Skeletons Citizens' Militia leader, Mark Graves is a very charismatic man, who has dreams of absolute power, being a hero, and no issues with resorting to violence to get what he wants. Graves moved on the capital under the guise of assisting his brother, offering the Citizens' Militia to support the police and serve as protectors of the citizenry. Mark had his brother killed at the first opportunity, blamed it on inhuman dimensional beings, and stepped into his brother's shoes. A strong and decisive leader in the middle of the madness, and with a small, loyal army of his own, nobody questioned Mark's ability or motives.

He wraps himself in the flag and claims everything he does is for the people. Of course, Mark Graves' actions less to do with saving lives and protecting the innocent, and everything to do with seizing power and building an empire for himself and his militant followers.

The appearance of alien beings giving him another tool to generate fear and get people to accept and follow him. He and his militia will keep the people of Lincoln safe from the monsters when everyone else has fled.

Based out of the underground bunker below Lincoln, Mark Graves has the advantage of an entrenched position and resources, plus a growing army of like-minded followers and terrified Nebraskans grasping at straws and willing to accept his reign to survive. And right now, in Lincoln, self-appointed Governor Mark Graves is the man of the hour.

Other People of Note

The Native American presence in Nebraska consists of the following tribes; the Oto, Pawnee, Omaha, Arapaho, Lakota, and Cheyenne. During the early days of the Great Cataclysm, and the resultant *Return*, they joined with surviving members of their tribes on reservations and remote hideouts. (See **Rifts® World Book 15: Spirit West** for info on Native American magic, creatures and O.C.C.s.) They are their own autonomous nations, and like the rest of Nebraska, are left to fend for themselves. Only they fare better than most.

In the beginning, there are scattered shamans and practitioners of traditional magic who have a unique perspective and insight about what is happening. The number of Shamans and development of magic increases over the months ahead. So does the overall population base as survivors travel back to their families from the cities. Some tribes have formed symbiotic relationships with the **Whispering Fields** (see the Monsters elsewhere in this article), at least in the years of what will become the 200 Years Dark Age, in order to feed their people. They allow the Whispering Fields to feed on the P.P.E. of tribe members who do not need it to practice any magicks or use innate psionics. Since the Great Cataclysm first transpires in December of 2098 and the ash in the atmosphere brings about the equivalent of a nuclear winter that will last a generation, this unholy union with the Whispering Fields is a necessary evil in a desperate bid to survive.

Survivors of the apocalypse soon find themselves trapped in the Long Winter, their land un-farmable due to the cold and ash. Underground food growth and top-side greenhouses become a priority to build and maintain, as is clearing fields of ash. Everyone must learn new ways to cope with the Coming of the Rifts.

The Ash Fallen. The marauders known as the Ash Fallen represent the worst type of survivors, those who survive by preying upon other people in the ash-laden wastelands of Western Nebraska. They may choose to fight with, and sometime alongside, the surviving citizenry of the Cornhusker State, but always with an eye for plunder: ally one minute, bandits and raiders the next. They live by the old adage: *dog eat dog*, and intend to be one of the top dogs.

There are others, but all are struggling and not likely to last long.

Ley Lines, Weather and Volcanoes

Ley Lines and Nexus Points. The people of Earth have no idea what hits them when the Blue Zones (ley lines) appear across the globe as massive highways of blue energy unleashing magic and monsters. Scholars in the age of Rifts Earth might have a vastly greater understanding of ley lines and nexus points than humanity does during the Cataclysm, but even the most astute and knowledgeable Ley Line Walker has to admit that there is much that is unknown about them. And even less about the initial eruption of magic in 2098.

During the Great Cataclysm and early decades of the *Two Hundred Years Dark Age* that followed, Rifts and dimensional portals stayed open not just for minutes, many remained open for hours, days, and months, sometimes years. Even on Rifts Earth there are a few locations like the Devil's Gate where Rifts open with frequency and stay open for inordinately long periods.

There have been a lot of changes across the world since the Coming of the Rifts in 2098. Nebraska is a prime example of this sort of change. When the initial magical wave encompassed the globe, Ley Lines sprang up all over, some stronger and more permanent than others. Nebraska is a little under-represented, with no known permanent Ley Lines to speak of, all of which would eventually fade to away to nothingness over the next 300 years. These waning and fading ley lines came and went over the course of time in Nebraska. Flaring bright in 2099 and slowly fading over the next decade or so. Several reappeared with a vengeance during the *Two Hundred Years Dark Age*, only to fade away again. The proximity to the Great Barrier Mountains has been attributed to be the cause of this cyclical waxing and waning, but so have more insidious speculations such as a cadre of Necromancers or Shifters or Temporal Raiders (or worse things) siphoning the power for nefarious purposes. According to legend, a dark force (Necromancers?) resurrected the bones of the undead across the ashen plains, including those of prehistoric creatures.

The first Ley Line in Nebraska sprang up at the badly deteriorated Chimney Rock, in western Nebraska. The second at nearby Courthouse Rock, but one of the most powerful and unstable of the Nebraska ley lines is in southwest Nebraska, and runs along part of the *Platte River*. The city of North Platte itself is gone. Reduced to rubble by forces unknown.

Possibly the most surprising Ley line nexus, sprang up at a tourist attraction humorously named **Carhenge**, located in the city of Alliance. It is a recreation, down to the last detail, of Stonehenge, but instead of rock, the recreation is made out of mid-to late-1950s classic cars. The emotions invested in those cars by previous owners, and the massive amount of tourists' energy over the last two centuries echoes in the solid steel and chrome bodies. Thus Carhenge is alive with hundreds of Haunting Entities and Poltergeists, especially during winter and summer solstice and other celestial events.

However, the greatest number of ley lines and nexus points during the Great Cataclysm appear in northern Nebraska. In the aftermath of the Coming of the Rifts and the early days of the *Two Hundred Years Dark Age*, The northern third of Nebraska is considered a no man's land of magic, mystery and monsters. Unpredictable and dangerous, most survivors try to avoid the region.

Ash and Lava. The Yellowstone Caldera, or super-volcano, lone is enough to shroud most of Nebraska under tons of ash and volcanic rock particles, but it is only one of hundreds of volcanic eruptions and earthquakes around the world. It is the combination of these many eruptions that create the effects of the so-called *nuclear winter* for an unknown number of years after the Great Cataclysm. In Nebraska, the ash rains down in heavy amounts across the state as well as throughout Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, Saskatchewan, Utah, Colorado and the Dakotas, but its affects are felt for more than 1,000 miles (1,600 km) in all directions.

In the northeast corner of Nebraska, what was once called the **Ionian Volcano**, located east of Newcastle, Nebraska, not far from Sioux City, and also known as *Nebraska's Prairie Volcano*, as well as *the Smoking Hills*, erupts not with lava – science had proved the smoking hills of old were not caused by volcanic activity – but with magical and dimensional energy. Here, a number of ley lines

intersect to create a powerful nexus point that creates all sorts of inexplicable phenomena, including a portal to another world that somehow instills people living in the area with the knowledge of Pyromancy magic. The area, considered a sacred place by Native Americans, is also the source of numerous strange occurrences, including an unusual number of psychics with healing powers. Pyromancers will fade and its magic forgotten sometime during the *Two Hundred Years Dark Age* yet to come. Perhaps it is because its practitioners were largely limited to this tiny corner of the world, but for a time, Pyromancers would be counted among the heroes (and villains) of the new Age of Chaos. Wizards who are able to summon, command and mold lava and fire. Another example of unpredictable magical forces at work in northern Nebraska. See **Chaos Earth: Nebraska, Part 2**, for details about Pyromancers in **The Rifter® #81**.

It is also said that Native American Shamans and healers were more powerful in these hills and along the ley lines there (increase damage and range 50%) and received vision quests, insight and visitations from their gods when performing ceremonies and rituals in the sacred hills.

Weather

Nebraska has always had a history of severe weather: Flooding, screaming winds, hail, ice, tornadoes, snowstorms, bizzards, and extreme heat. After the return of magic, new miracles and horrors arrive daily. Not just in the form of D-Bees and monsters, but in strange, violent weather.

The weather in Nebraska during the Ashfall is horrendous. Gigantic storms of lightning, torrential rains, tornadoes, and hail in the Spring and Summer; ice and blizzards in the Winter become commonplace, causing more destruction and loss of life. It snows in July, it hails in the winter; nothing is as it was or should be. But the rain fills the rivers, and it washes away the ash from fields, especially along the Platte River. Many believe this is the result of the long ley line that runs along the western length of the Platte River from North Platte to Scottsbluff. This improves agricultural recovery for the eastern half of the state, but makes the western half dangerous. Ash Storms often brew with strong hail and howling winds that tear across the land. The Missouri river channel has enlarged, and lava flows from a small caldera in eastern Nebraska.

The most turbulent and unnerving new weather to blast across the state are storms that have been dubbed as Zone Twisters! **Zone Twisters** are massive tornadoes ensconced in magical energy, like a rolling open nexus point sparking, flaring and erupting with dimensional dangers. It is different and more violent and unpredictable than a Ley Line Storm. Zone Twister can cause all sorts of trouble, unleashing oddities, monsters, and danger as it rages across the land. Like a tornado, it can cut a swath of destruction, but just as often the Zone Twisters, worst along the *Platte River Ley Line*, pass through buildings, trees and people as if it were a phantom tornado or a magical illusion. It is from the *Phantom Zone Twister* that oddities and monsters are disgorged by the swirling winds and crackling magic.

“Reaper” Power Armor

The Reaper is not new nor a military weapon. Rather it is an old commercial design from the KLS Corporation. It is a suit of power armor originally designed a couple of decades earlier for farm labor. Until the Coming of the Rifts, it has been used exclusively for agricultural, horticultural, farm and livestock operations. Ideal for lifting, carrying, picking and processing crops, trimming trees, cutting hay and other crops, building fences, and so on. Hence the scythes and the renaming of it as the “Grim Reaper” or “Reaper” by NEMA forces and survivors who utilized the armor. Prior to that its nickname was “Farmer Brown” or the “Axe” power armor, the latter short for its formal I.D. as *AXO-USA-022 Agricultural Exoskeleton*. As a multi-operational exoskeleton it is also designed to drill, plow, pick, reap, and spray crops.

Many farms, both private and commercial, had Farmer Brown power armor, as the cost of exoskeletons and robots were shockingly low during humankind’s Golden Age of Science. Still, it was usually cheaper to use vehicles and physical labor for most farms, so the number of these exoskeletons is, overall, low. Small farms may have only one or two, medium-sized farms 2D4, large farms 4D4, and the largest ranches and commercial farm operations: 4D6. (**Note:** The largest farms tend to rely on vehicles and robots, not power armor-clad workers.)

In the early days of the Great Cataclysm, the Nebraskan National Guard commandeers 81 Farmer Brown power armors, repaints them and re-designates them as “Reapers.” They are procured from large farms to assist them in emergency and civil defense operations. National Guard Reapers are uniformly painted, numbered, and dispersed into the field in squads of 2, 4 or 6, and are likely to be part of a larger, mixed squad or company.

Privately owned armors remain available to the farm owners to help defend their property, crops, employees and families. This also means the Reaper may be a resource found by survivors in the months ahead and even into the coming Dark Age. These commercial units are painted in yellow, with black and/or red colored highlights, much like typical tractors and other farm vehicles and equipment.

Since the collapse of human civilization, the Reaper power armors prove to be very effective in rescue and emergency operations, digging through, and pulling people from rubble, hauling cargo, distributing food, water and supplies, building light temporary shelters and tents, light construction work, guard duty, and even as light combat units. New threats, ranging from giant insects, strange monsters and alien beings, to dragons and supernatural demons, makes it necessary to have Mega-Damage defenders and weapons. The Reaper has now joined those ranks as a light combat and multi-purpose power armor. The positive outcomes of utilizing the Reaper in emergency rescue and combat roles has made it increasingly popular among the Nebraska National Guard and NEMA forces in Nebraska as well as among other forces operating in the so-called Bread Basket States and Provinces in Canada.

Though not well-equipped for combat and only lightly armored, the Reaper offers decent protection for its operator, and has S.D.C. combat capabilities and a few light M.D. weapons. The drill located on each forearm can pierce M.D. armor and the hides of Mega-Damage monsters. The Vibro-Blade scythe can also inflict M.D., and the power armor’s operator can arm himself with handheld weapons such as M.D. assault rifles, grenade launchers and rail guns. In some cases, the traditional scythe farm tool is being replaced with more powerful M.D. Vibro-Blade weapons. The chemical spray system design for tending crops can be utilized to spray insecticides, poi-

sons, or non-potable water. And its array of small, robot arms intended for rapidly picking fruits and crops, can be used in a number of capacities, as noted earlier. The small, light arms can also wield small, light handheld melee weapons, though the pilot is limited to only so many attacks per melee round and can only focus his attention on so many targets.

Reaper Power Armor Stats

Also Known as: “Grim Reaper,” “the Axe” and “Farmer Brown.”

Model Type: AXO-USA-022.

Class: Agricultural/Farm Labor Exoskeleton/Power Armor.

Crew: One pilot.

M.D.C. by Location:

* Head/Helmet Unit – 50

* Protective Cage – 30

Main Human Arms (2) – 35 each

* Small Crop Picking Robot Arms (6) – 15 each

* Vibro-Scythe (2) – 30 each

* Power Drill Tools (2) – 50 each

* Sprayers (2) – 12 each

Legs (2) – 70 each

Light Array (2, with 6 lights per each shoulder; 2 swivel) – 12 for the whole unit per each shoulder.

** Main Body – 112

* A single asterisk indicates a small and difficult target to strike, requiring the attacker to make a “Called Shot,” and even then the attacker is -4 to strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body shuts the armor down completely, making it useless.

Speed:

Running: 40 mph (64 km) maximum. The act of running does tire the operator, but only at 20% of the usual fatigue rate.

Leaping: The robot legs can leap up to 10 feet (3 m) high or across. Add 10 feet (3 m) across with a running start.

Flying: Not possible.

Water: The Reaper was not designed for use underwater, however it can move along across the bottom of lakes or rivers at 15 mph (24 km). Maximum depth tolerance is 400 feet (122 m).

Statistical Data:

Height: 7.5 feet (2.3 m).

Width: 4 feet (1.2 m).

Length: 3 feet (0.9 m).

Weight: 600 lbs (270 kg).

Physical Strength: Robot P.S. of 18.

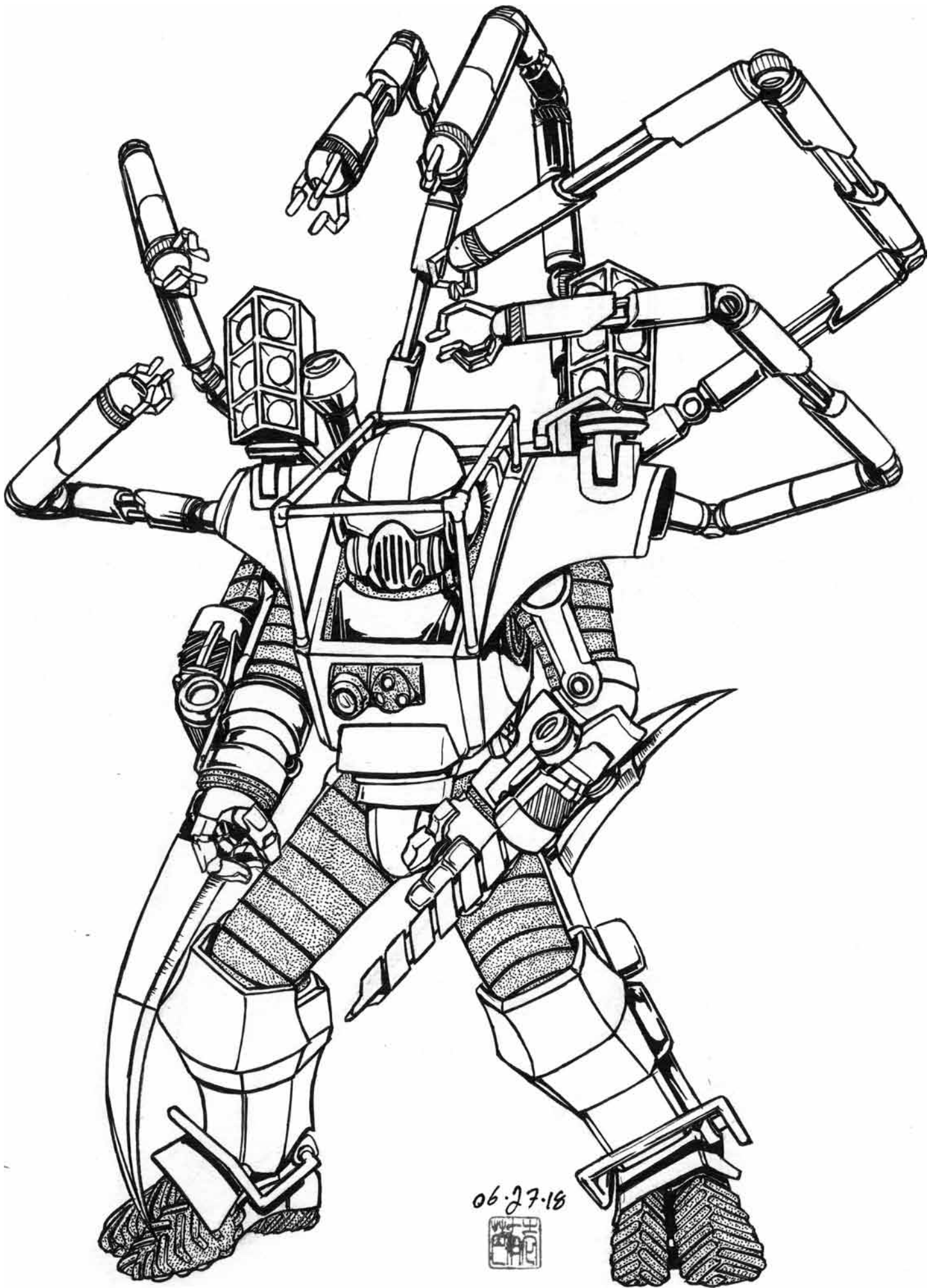
Cargo: Minimal storage space. Enough to hold a packed lunch, canteen, survival knife, handgun, and first aid kit.

Power System: Nuclear. Which means they have an unlimited fuel capacity and power source with an average energy life of 20 years, before needing a new power source. Varies with use.

Golden Age Cost & Availability: 500,000 credits. Fair to good availability at high-tech farms, though being commandeered by NEMA to supplement their units and life saving operations. Still, odds are many farms will have at least a few. Any power armor offered for sale in the aftermath of the Great Cataclysm is likely to have been stolen or found, and sells for 1-3 million credits or equivalent in trade.

Weapon Systems:

1. RX1 Shoulder Sprayer: A compact sprayer is attached to the left shoulder of the Reaper. It is used for spraying crops with bug killer, water and other fluids.



06.27.18



Range: 50 feet (15.2 m) maximum.

Damage: Generally, none. Damage is likely to depend upon the liquid contained in the spray canister. Weed killer, insecticides and other poisons and chemicals that are sprayed in an unprotected face will burn and temporarily blind human and many D-Bee opponents. Blindness (-10 to strike, parry, dodge, and inflict 1D4 S.D.C. damage) lasts until the chemical is thoroughly flushed and cleaned from the eyes (which takes 1D6+4 melee rounds). Demon Hoppers and most creatures of magic and supernatural beings are not affected/blinded by such chemicals. Ordinary water can hurt Vampires (as per squirt gun damage) and any creatures vulnerable to water.

Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as one melee attack/action.

Payload: A maximum of 10 gallons (37.8 liters) can be carried. A larger tank may be mounted on the back, containing 30 gallons (113.5 liters).

2. RX2 Small Robot Arms (6): A set of six small, robot arms and hands unfold from the back of the exoskeleton for picking crops and general assistance. They reach up or down to where the wearer of the Reaper looks, picks the fruit, berry, nut, cotton, or crop, puts it in a container, and picks the next at a good rate of speed. The arms can also be used to help climb up and down trees, ladders and rope, and to hold on to prevent loss of balance and falling. They may also be used to carry packages, hold tools and objects, or even use small, light weapons such as a knife, hand axe, scissors, pruning shears, or pistol. However, the number of attacks is limited by the pilot's own combat abilities, and the wearer of the armor can only look and operate so many arms and hands at a time: his own two and two others.

Range: 6 feet (1.8 m).

Damage for Small Arms: Varies, but is always S.D.C.

Restrained Punch: 1D4 S.D.C. each.

Full Strength Punch: 2D6 S.D.C. each.

Power Punch: Not possible with these small arms.

Bonuses: None for these small, extra arms.

Maximum Weight Capacity of each Small Arm: 20 pounds (9 kg) per a single arm.

3. Power Drill Tools (2): The Reaper's dual drills are built into the forearm of each of the arms. They can drill into M.D. materials, making them suitable as simple, light M.D. weapons as well as a tool. Can interchange the drill bit with smaller drills if they are available, and if designed for the armor.

Range: Arm's reach of 7 feet (2.1 m).

Damage: 5D6 S.D.C. at regular power. A blunt attack/jab with a drill not in operation/moving is the same as punch damage: 4D6 S.D.C.

1D6+4 M.D. amplified to Mega-Damage capacity (requires a one-time override Computer Programming skill application). Mega-Damage attacks count as two melee attacks. This is always an impaling attack. A maximum strength *drill slash* with a moving drill bit that rakes across a surface while the drill is moving does 1D4 M.D. and counts as one attack.

4. Scythe Tools (2): The Reaper's primary cutting tool is a large, energized Vibro-Scythe. Though not designed for combat, the Scythe makes a good weapon able to inflict Mega-Damage with power attacks.

Range: Arm's reach; close combat.

Damage: 2D6+2 S.D.C. at normal power level. 5D6 damage from an amped up S.D.C. power attack/slash, but counts as two melee attack for a power move.

1D6 M.D. amplified to Mega-Damage Capacity (requires a one-time override Computer Programming skill application). An M.D. power slash does 2D6 M.D. counts as two melee attacks. **Note:** A

power punch/slash/attack always counts as two attacks regardless of whether damage is S.D.C. or M.D.

5. Hand to Hand Combat: Available only to characters who have any *Power Armor: Combat Elite* skill (typically combat characters, not farm labor personnel). **Note:** All bonuses are in addition to the pilot's own hand to hand combat training and attribute bonuses. They do *not* apply to the pilot's physical abilities outside the robot.

+1 extra attack/action per melee round, *plus* those of the pilot at levels 1, 5, 10 and 15.

Critical Strike is the same as the pilot's.

+1 to strike.

+2 to parry.

+1 to dodge.

+2 to disarm and grapple/entangle.

+1 to pull punch.

+1 to roll with impact.

Hand to Hand Damage: These are commercial labor machines not designed for combat or to inflict Mega-Damage. As a result, damage is minimal.

Restrained Punch: 1D6 S.D.C.

Full Strength Punch: 4D6 S.D.C.

Power Punch: 1D4 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Head Butt: 2D4 S.D.C.

Kick Damage: 5D6 S.D.C.

Power Kick: 1D4 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Running Leap Kick: 2D4 M.D., but counts as three attacks and has a 60% chance of knocking an opponent up to 9 feet (2.7 m) tall and 1,000 pounds (450 kg) off its feet. The victim loses initiative and one melee attack.

Body Block/Body Ram: 4D6 S.D.C.

Full Speed Running Ram: 1D4 M.D., but this attack uses up two melee actions.

Note: See #2, above, for the damage and capabilities of the six, small robot arms, #3 for the drills and #4 for the Vibro-Blade Scythes.

6. Sensor Systems and Features of Note: All those standard in even commercial, civilian power armor plus the following:

1. Optical Multi-Systems: Macro magnification for close work, repairs and examining crops for blight, bugs and parasites, as well as binocular telescopic (2 miles/3.2 km), infrared, passive nightvision (light amplification), and polarization.

2. Boom Blaster: To chase birds away from crops, the Reaper has a built-in unit that unleashes a loud, deep, booming noise. It can be set off as a single boom or set to boom every 1, 2 or 3 minutes. The boom can also be used to chase away other animals such as coyotes, foxes, groundhogs, rabbits, and deer, and has a 50/50 chance of convincing a bear or other predator to leave rather than stick around to see what made the boom. In the new world of chaos, it may also be used to frighten or startle an enemy or monster, or use as a signal or warning to teammates.

3. Coordinated Sound Muffling System: Due the Boom Blaster above, Farmer Brown armor comes with a simple sound muffling system to prevent damage to the ears. It is set in tandem to activate one second before the boom goes off and then turns back to normal hearing. To the wearer of the armor, the boom is a soft, barely noticeable "whump." What the wearer is more likely to notice is the lack of sound for 2-3 seconds.

4. High Powered Lights: The lights are used for picking crops in the dim light of dawn or dusk, and for close work at night. Illuminates a 15 foot (4.6 m) radius bright enough to pick apples, peanuts, blueberries, etc., or read a book. The two light racks are

mounted on swivels that can be turned 180 degrees and can be dimmed as desired; 300 foot (91 m) effective range.

5. Built-in Radio Receiver: A basic radio to receive radio station and Citizen Band transmissions. Mainly for listening to music and shows on radio stations to help pass the time in the field, but can also be set for use as built-in walkie-talkies. Range: 15 miles (24 km) as walkie-talkies, can pickup radio station transmissions up to 100 miles (160 km) away.

6. Language Translator: A standard, commercial language translator.

Nebraska Police Gear

During the Golden Age and the Coming of the Rifts, as seen in the above Shadows over Omaha story, Officer Buck Bauer and others used some of the following items: An Interceptor Hover Squad Car, an Armored Trench Coat, a TSI Tactical "Scorpion" .45 ACP Handgun, and a recovered NEMA pistol, the NEMA MIP 21 Ion Pistol (see page 56 of the **Chaos Earth® RPG**). These standard issued OPD items are presented below.

Omaha Police Department (OPD) Hover Squad Car

The main North American hover vehicles utilized by NEMA and non-NEMA First Responders is presented in the upcoming **Chaos Earth® First Responders** sourcebook. The hover squad car is a variation utilized by the OPD.

Nickname: Cop Car, Cruiser, Interceptor.

Class: Emergency Response Hover Vehicle. Purchased from the *North American Vehicles Company* and altered per departmental specifications (slight increase to doors and interior paneling to separate officers from those in custody).

Crew: One driver, one passenger in the front seat and up to three in the rear, separated by clear M.D.C. Paneling.

M.D.C. by Location:

* Hover Jets (4) – 20 each

* Roof Light Rack (1) – 5

Windshield (Front, Rear and internal paneling) – 15 each

* Side Windows (4) – 10 each

Doors (2 front) – 35 each in addition to Main Body

Doors (2 rear) – 20 each in addition to Main Body

** Main Body – 100

* Items marked by a single asterisk are small and/or difficult to strike. An attacker must make a "Called Shot" to hit and even then is -3 to strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body completely destroys the vehicle. The doors are reinforced and damage capacity at these locations is higher.

Speed:

Flying: 240 mph (384 km). VTOL capable, can hover stationary (or fly) up to a height of 80 feet (24.4 m) in order to avoid civilian traffic or gain access to rooftops or other hard to reach locations.

Water: The police car can skim across the surface of the water at a speed of 100 mph (160 km/87 knots), but is not submersible, and if it stops moving on the water it sinks.

Flying Range: Unlimited with a nuclear power system, able to fly at top speed for 96 hours without fear of overheating. Most of these vehicles were used for 10 to 20 hours a day, prior to the Coming of

the Rifts, as shifts of officers hand-off the vehicle from one shift to the next.

Statistical Data:

Height: 6 feet, 1 inch (1.9 m).

Width: 6 feet, 8 inches (2.0 m).

Length: 16 feet, 10 inches (5.1 m).

Weight: 2.1 tons, fully loaded.

Cargo: 18 cubic feet (0.5 cubic meters) in the trunk, more than half is usually taken by onboard computer systems and the rest is stocked with departmental emergency gear. Officers are limited to a medium-sized duffle bag (go bag) with available room for lunch, thermos, helmet, extra ammunition and some personal items in the trunk.

Power System: All Nebraska State Patrol vehicles of this model are nuclear powered with a 20 year life.

Cost and Availability: As a Mega-Damage hovercraft, starting price on the legitimate market would have a minimum value of 150,000 credits, after being upgraded by the OPD they cost, on average, fully loaded, 380,000 credits. After the Coming of the Rifts, such a vehicle would demand at least two or three times that amount or equivalent in trade. Fair to good availability to law enforcement, poor availability on the open market.

Armored Trench Coat

This medium-weight trench coat was first used by the Texas Highway Patrol, New Mexico Highway Patrol and the California Highway Patrol. Providing armor to more of an officer's body, the long coat is also used during riots by SWAT and, if not worn, at least carried in a squad vehicle. Many hoverbike officers wear the long coat regularly. Many police officers wear their concealed vest armor under the long coat, especially since the advent of the Great Cataclysm. The Armored Trench Coat is also widely used by Corporate Security and some NEMA Agents depending on availability or when deemed necessary. By 2096, the Police Departments of most major cities, including Omaha, Lincoln, Oklahoma, Kansas City, Phoenix, St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, New York City, Boston, Baltimore, D.C., etc., had adopted the armored trench coat in addition to regular concealed vests. Smaller law enforcement facilities would have them for the Chief and S.W.A.T., if no one else.

Class: Long Coat Armor System.

Size: Human equivalent.

Weight: 18 pounds (8.1 kg).

M.D.C. by Location:

Head/Helmet (optional Motorcycle or Riot style) – 70

Arms – 25 each

Legs – 38 each

Main Body – 50

Mobility: Fair mobility; -10% to Acrobatics, Climb, Prowl, Swim, and similar physical skills/performance.

Armor Rating: 16 (18 with an M.D.C. helmet). Any roll to strike above the A.R. hits the wearer and does full damage, probably to the lower leg, foot or head, unless wearing a helmet.

Cost & Availability: Illegal to own in North America except by special permit from the NAA. Generally reserved for Law Enforcement, Corporate Security, and public figures with a permit. It is nearly impossible to find for sale or trade, commanding 75,000-150,000 credits and up when available.

Special Weapon Systems or Features: Built-in web belt, deep pockets, inside pouches, and holsters.

TSI Tactical “Scorpion” .45 ACP Pistol

At the heart of the TSI Tactical “Scorpion” .45 ACP is a 5 inch ramped and fully supported barrel. Machined from 416R rifle-grade stainless steel, the barrel has button-broached, 1-in-16-inch rifling and is capped with a 45-degree crown. The barrel is mated to a bushing fitted to a 4140 carbon-steel-forged slide. Aggressive cocking serrations are cut into the front and rear of the slide, and the Scorpion .45’s ejection port is lowered and flared. Widely used by law enforcement.

Range: Effective from 2-60 feet (0.6 to 18.3 m), with a maximum effective range of 800 feet (244 m), but -1 to strike for ever 150 feet (46 m) beyond the first 150 feet (i.e., -4 to strike at 800 feet/244 m).

Damage: 5D6+2 S.D.C.

Rate of Fire: Single shot only.

Payload: 16 round magazine (.45 ACP).

Notes: Specifically designed for law enforcement close quarters combat.

Cost & Availability: Varies; in the post-apocalyptic worlds, 1,000 credits and up. Even though it is specifically designed for law enforcement, it was available on the open market. Adopted standard firearm for most Nebraska police agencies and most police in the Midwest.

Monsters of Nebraska

A few notable monsters common to Nebraska.

Ash Worms

The Ash Worm is a giant, 30-60 foot (9.1 to 18.3 m) creature from another world that greatly resembles a giant earthworm and has a nearly identical physiology. They are probably brought to Earth by *Blue Zone Twisters* as there have been a number of firsthand eyewitness accounts of people seeing them dropped from these weird, swirling blue tornadoes; or a swarm of them left on the ground in its wake. There are also wild tales of a man-sized humanoid creature completely covered in, or composed of, worms! They too are said to be brought to Earth by the Zone Twisters. (See *Worm Wraiths in Rifts® New West*.)

Ash Worms are found across Nebraska, and presumably other ash covered states around it. (It is too early in the apocalypse for people to know the extent of otherworldly contamination, and many places have monsters unique to just their isolated region.) Normal earthworms do not eat fresh meat, living animals, people, or bones, preferring plant matter, fungi and the decomposing remains of plants, vegetables, fruit, animals and people. But they eat a wide range of food, including egg shells, tea bags, wood, soil and even some tiny, living organisms found in the soil such as protozoans, rotifer, and bacteria. The same is true of the giant Ash Worms, only on a bigger scale. On one hand this is good, because no matter how disgusting and scary they may look, they eat ash, debris, wood, and the remains of the billions of dead animals and dead people after the apocalypse. That is a very good thing. In their wake, the worms

leave behind waste in the form of fertilized, arable soil, another good thing for the future.

Ash Worms themselves can be eaten by humans, providing a food source where food is hard to find, though killing these 30+ foot (9.1 m) giants can be a difficult task. Unfortunately, Ash Worms do not taste very good, not even when dried out and ground into high-protein granola bits, or into a powder used as a flour substitute or to make an edible paste. Thus, Ash Worms are an asset in many ways.

Ash Worms do not have eyes but do have light receptors, so they know when they are in the light or dark. They also have mouths, though when the mouth is closed it is not easily visible even on these giants. Worms don’t have teeth, and shovel food into their mouth with a sort of prehensile upper lip that extends and is quite strong. To process food that is pushed into its maw, powerful muscles crush and push the food inward into what is called the crop. It is then moved into the gizzard where the food is crushed up and ground to go into the intestine. There it is broken down by enzymes and absorbed into the body. Whatever is not absorbed into the body is pushed out as castings, i.e. worm poop. They taste food via chemoreceptors across their bodies.

Ash Worms do not have ears and do not hear words or sounds, just their vibrations. Their bodies are sensitive to vibrations and Ash Worms quickly learn to recognize and avoid heavy vehicles and stay clear of explosions. That means the impact and vibrations released by hand grenades and other explosives will cause Ash Worms to move around and away from the violent vibrations, perhaps even go back the way they just came. Ash Worms can move forward and in reverse, breathe through their skin (no lungs) and avoid fire and extreme (M.D.) heat. They can survive underwater, drawing in oxygen from the water through their skin, but cannot swim and will eventually die (within 3D6+20 days).

Unfortunately, they are also a serious danger among the ruins of civilization, especially to surviving cities, towns, farms and other populated areas. Ash Worms are so large, they eat almost anything and are big enough and heavy enough to smash through S.D.C. structures like fences and walls, including the glass, wood, plaster, and light brick (but not cinder block or thick concrete bunker walls) of sheds, barns, garages, homes, and other building that have walls made of glass, wood, plaster or light or crumbling brick. The Ash Worms’ bodies are also pliable enough to squeeze through open or missing doors and through holes in walls or walls that are partially knocked down. It is nothing for a 30+ foot (9.1+ m) worm to reach a hole located in the upper part of a wall or a hole in the roof of a house, or to pop up thru the floor. The bottom-line is that the creatures can easily smash through the door, wall, floor or ceiling of most homes and buildings. **Note:** The vast majority of homes and buildings in 2098, worldwide, are still made of S.D.C. materials. It is only some of the big skyscrapers of the last 30 years, military compounds and bunkers that are made from M.D.C. concrete, steel and other materials.

Once inside a home or building, the Ash Worm starts to eat *everything* inside! The drapes, carpeting, pillows, chairs, the sofa, the mattress, books, posters, clothing, paintings hanging on the walls, ceramic or plastic dishes, and any dead bodies inside. Even if the giant worm is not hunting you as prey – because they don’t hunt prey, they scavenge and eat what’s in front of them – as it moves through the building it is compromising the structure. It is weakening the floor, smashing and eating stairs, knocking down walls, including load-bearing walls and support beams, and starts eating the debris of wood, plaster and people trapped under the debris. They are the proverbial “bull in the china shops,” knocking down and smashing everything in its wake and then eating it. Ash Worms are the mon-

sters that inadvertently demolishes the buildings and makes toppled buildings and ruins even more unstable. They can kill you by eating you, sure, but Ash Worms are more likely to kill you by dropping a building on your head, or dropping you into a hole as it burrows underneath you.

Being so large, the worms eats any food or groceries left out, as well as clothing, furniture, pets, chickens, livestock, and people who are not able get out of the creature's path! People who are sick, injured or slow (infants, young children and the elderly), or someone who gets pinned or their exit blocked by falling debris, are the most vulnerable.

From a Game Master's point of view. Ash Worms can literally pop-up anywhere, anytime, appearing from the ground, smashing in through a wall, floor or ceiling, surfacing from the ash, the ground or rising up from along the shore of a lake just about anywhere. And where do survivors in an apocalypse go to find food and resources? To the ruins of the cities, which is where Ash Worms are most numerous because, a) the many corpses and edible debris for them to eat, and b) it is dark and damp in and under those ruins, just the way they like it.

Ash Worms are quite silent. Odds are survivors will not realize one is there or coming their way until it shows itself. In the ash plains, giant worms close to the surface will cause the ground/ash to move and ripple, even creating little trails of ash as it is disturbed and pushed into the air. On more solid ground, people might feel a slight vibration as the creature(s) approaches, but is the tremor being caused by a giant worm, a volcanic activity or earthquake? People won't know for sure until the Ash Worm pops out of the ground, or pushes through the floor or a wall. Crawling on the surface and through ruins and debris, the worm makes an intermittent noise that sounds like a soft swosh, like a wet mop being pushed or pulled across the floor as it moves. Depending on the environment, that swosh might be accompanied by the occasional sound of rubble or objects moving or falling as the creature brushes against them, or things falling when it knocks down a wall or loose timber. But mostly, they are silent.

The good news is that Ash Worms do not pursue, hunt or ambush prey. They are scavengers that eat what comes their way. That means even if one or more Ash Worms suddenly appear in the middle of your adventurers' camp or the house you've been living in, you can probably get out of their way and skirt around them before they find and eat you.

As a food scavenger, the first instinct of Ash Worms that are attacked is to go underground and escape, especially when in/on ash or soil. If the attacker persists, it fights. Likewise, if it is cornered or does not have a fast, easy exit or soft earth to tunnel into, the Ash Worm uses its body to swat, strike, ram or plow over its attacker. Most only fight long enough to escape, but if the attack stops, it will find and eat those who have been killed or injured. Ash Worms are Mega-Damage creatures, but they can be killed. Still, most civilian survivors run away when they see an Ash Worm coming. On the other hand, if one or more of these giant worms are encountered resting or eating, people can tiptoe around them without fear of being attacked unless they disturb or attack them first. Ash Worms busy eating or resting are content and don't care about eating food/people who are moving near them, as long as they leave them alone and keep moving.

The bad news is that a lot of people are killed by Ash Worms one way or another. Furthermore, when the ash stops falling and the nuclear winter ends, Ash Worms feed on crops of every kind, shrubs, small trees, fallen trees, fruit, nuts, bark, leaves and branches of trees up to 20 feet (6 m) high, grass, shoes, bedrolls, backpacks,

tents, huts, houses, tires, insects, animals, livestock, pets, and people! And as they reproduce and multiply they become a bigger and bigger problem for people in this part of the country!

Ash Worm Stats

Also Known As: Giant Worms, Demon Worms or Deadibles.

Alignment: Insect scavenger, considered Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4+1 (low animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6, M.A. 1D4, P.S. 1D6+10, P.P. 1D6+4, P.E. 2D6+12, P.B. 1D4, Spd 1D6+28 (30 mph/48 km), digging speed is half.

M.D.C.: 3D6x10+40 (+40 if 50 feet/15.2 meters long; +80 M.D.C. if 60 feet/18.3 m long).

Horror Factor: 10 for one or two giant worms. H.F. 13 when there are 6 or more.

Size: 30-60 feet (9.1 to 18.3 m).

Weight: 6-12 tons!

Average Life Span: 5-10 years on average.

P.P.E.: 1D6

Disposition: Not much disposition or personality. As a worm, all it does is crawl around, burrow underground, eat, sleep and burrow into the ground to avoid predators. They dig around non-edible materials like solid rock, sand, lava, metal and M.D.C. materials. Though not a predator, strictly speaking, they are so large that Ash Worms are a threat to animals, livestock and people.

Equivalent Skill Abilities: Climb 30%, Prowl 80%, Track by following Vibrations 85%, track by taste and smell 77% (+13% for decomposing human, animal and plant remains) using chemoreceptors in its body and keying in on *food*.

Natural Abilities: Like earthworms, these giants can regenerate entire new bodies if the lower half is chopped off or destroyed! Only the front third with the head and clitellum is capable of regenerating, the other half dies. Otherwise, regenerates damage at a rate of 5D6 per 24 hours. Hibernates, underground where it is protected, up to eight months during winter. Ash Worms love rain and come to the surface in large numbers when it rains, making them most dangerous to humanoids during rainstorms.

When it gets too cold (or too hot), they dig deep where the frost and cold (or heat) cannot reach them and hibernate. Ash Worms can tolerate cold and heat better than normal earthworms, but still prefer cool, moist conditions at 40-80 degrees Fahrenheit (4.4 to 26.6 C).

Attacks per Melee: Two.

Mega-Damage:

Head Butt: 6D6 S.D.C.

Bite: 2D4 M.D.

Tail Slash: 2D6 M.D.

Body Slam: 2D6 M.D. and has a 60% chance of knocking down opponents up to 10 feet (3 m) tall. Victims of knockdown lose initiative and one attack.

Body Roll: The worm rolls, thrashes or crawls over a person or vehicle doing 3D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks. Opponents up to 12 feet (3.6 m) tall are knocked down by this attack and lose initiative and one attack.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +2 to strike, +1 to dodge, impervious to psionics, +4 to save versus disease and poison, +3 to save vs psionic attack, and +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Vulnerabilities: M.D.C. fire, heat and explosives inflict 50% more damage. S.D.C. fire that is large enough (at least a torch) will hold them at bay. Freezing temperatures first reduces their speed and eventually kills them. Cold and ice-based weapons, however, do normal damage.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Habitat: Nebraska, the Dakotas, Wyoming, Montana, Colorado and Kansas. **Enemies:** Large M.D. animal predators like dinosaurs, humans and D-Bees.

Allies: Other Ash Worms. Cannot be domesticated, but can be herded and wrangled to some degree.

Value: As food, especially before they reach full maturity and giant-size. One credit per five pounds (2.25 kg) as a food source; more if the people are desperate.



Demon Hoppers

Later known as the Xiticix

With the Coming of the Rifts, new and strange beings emerged in the time of Chaos. Some Dimensional Beings (D-Bees) were merely hapless victims torn away from their other world homes and transplanted to Earth during this turbulent time. The people of Nebraska have witnessed such an event with the arrival of the *Bug Men*, or Demon Hoppers, that have arrived on Earth.

The Hoppers are sometimes called Saw Legs, due to the barbs on their legs, and spikes and barbs on their other limbs, as well as on their jagged resin spears and serrated swords. Vaguely humanoid, these intelligent beings are not human at all. They care nothing about working together with other races and seem to thrive on death and feeding. Horrific mandibles and sharp, carnivorous fangs and teeth are used to feed on living beings. As long as it breathes, it is considered a food source to the Hopper, with cities large and small their preferred targets. They seem to be coming from the northeast, perhaps Minnesota or Wisconsin. Swarms with hundreds of Bug Men have been reported by NEMA troops in the neighboring Dako-

tas and Minnesota. Thankfully, most Bug Man swarms in Nebraska are small with 2D4x10 members and easily dispatched by NEMA and the National Guard.

Demon Hopper Stats

Also Known As: Demon Grasshoppers, Hoppers, Bug Men and Saw Legs. This is actually the first appearance of the *Xiticix*. The basic stats for the Xiticix Hunter is below. See **Rifts® World Book 23: Xiticix Invasion** for complete information on all types of Xiticix.

Alignment: Considered Diabolic evil by the humans of Chaos Earth.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6+8; functions on instinct as much as intellect. M.E. 2D6+12, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 2D6+18 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+18, P.E. 1D6+12 (Supernatural), P.B. 1D6, Spd. 3D6+10 running and 2D4x10+80 flying. The average flying speed is 120 (82 mph/131 km).

Size: 7 feet (2.1 m).

Weight: 400 lbs (180 kg).

M.D.C. by Location (Adult Hunter):

Eyes: Large (2) – 15 each

Eyes: Small (5) – 10 each

Antennae (2) – 20 each
Arms (4) – 40 each
Legs (2) – 50 each
Wings (2) – 50 each
Main Body – 1D4x10+20 + P.E. number.
(Warriors are 1D6x10+20 + P.E. number.)

M.D.C. (Young): Half those of the adult.

Horror Factor: 10 for one. 13 for a squad of 10-20. 15 for a swarm of 20 or more.

Disposition: Aggressive, combative and downright violent. Always active and easily agitated when not in combat. Hunt in groups of 6-8, often encountered in larger parties.

Notable Skills: Climb 75%, Detect Ambush 50%, Hunting 75%, Land Navigation 90%, Prowl 55%, Swim 45%, Wilderness Survival 80% and W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword, W.P. Spear, W.P. Knife.

Natural Abilities: Mega-Damage exoskeleton plating like a grasshopper or beetle. It has wings and can fly, but is able to leap 12 feet (3.6 m) high and across without using wings. Can leap from any height and glide down to a lower location or to the ground. They prefer to leap and silently glide (100 feet/30 m) when on the hunt or engaging in scouting, because flying makes noise.

Can also secrete resin to make weapons, track by sound or motion/vibrations alone 66%, hear ultrasonic frequencies (2,000 foot/610 m range), communicate with each other via ultrasonic sound, antennae can accurately identify wind speed and direction 85% and detect an approaching object or attack (worked into bonuses), track by smell alone 75% (+15% for known scents, including fellow Bug Men, blood, decay and chemical trails).

Types of Chemical Excretions (special): Call to Arms, Chemical Alarm, Death Scent, Trail Scent, and Mark Target.

Natural Camouflage (special): Can change color to blend in with the environment like a chameleon (+20% to Prowl when moving slowly).

Special Combat Moves: A common tactic is to attack with two hands and parry with two. Furthermore, because the Xiticix practically have eyes in the back of their heads (thanks to their 340 degree range of peripheral vision and sensory abilities of their antennae), they can engage in *simultaneous* and multiple combat actions.

Grapple/Wrestle & Hit: The multi-limbed Warrior can opt to hold, pin or grapple with an opponent with two hands and strike with his other two.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Mega-Damage Hand to Hand Combat: The Supernatural P.S. of the Warrior means that punches do Mega-Damage. Damages below are representative of an average Xiticix Warrior's strength.

Critical Strike on a roll of a natural 19-20 (double damage).

Restrained punch: 4D6 S.D.C.

Normal punch: 2D6 M.D.

Power Punch: 4D6 M.D. (counts as two attacks).

Leap Attack: 5D6 M.D. (counts as two attacks).

Bite attack: 3D6 M.D. plus poison damage.

Head Butt: 1D4 M.D.

Weapons Note: Most make and use M.D.C. resin spears, sickle short sword and large swords. Damage as per Supernatural P.S. +1D6 M.D.

Bonuses (in addition to possible Attribute Bonuses): +2 on Perception Rolls, +3 on initiative, +2 to strike, +4 to parry, +2 to dodge, +2 to disarm, +6 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, can perform kick attacks, and +2 to save vs poison and disease.

Magic: None. **P.P.E.:** 2D4x10+10.

Psionic Abilities: Presence Sense, See the Invisible, Sense Evil, Sense Magic, Sense Time, and Mind Block. **I.S.P.:** M.E. number x2.

Attacks per Melee: 5

Magic: None.

Habitat: Currently Eastern Nebraska and possibly South Dakota and/or Minnesota.

Enemies: All humans and D-Bees, also preys on animals.

Allies: Typically its own species. Avoids other Supernatural predators.

Value: None.

Undead Fossils

The how and why these resurrected and properly put together, fossil exist, are not known. But there have been numerous reports of prehistoric mammal and dinosaur remains that have come to life to walk the plains once again. Only this time as animated skeletons. Are the bones inhabited by Entities? Is this the work of magic or Necromancers? Or is it the handiwork of an alien being? Nobody knows. Nor is it known how many there are, or why they seem to exist only in southwest Nebraska near the Platte river ley Line and southeastern Wyoming.

The walking skeletons behave as they did when alive – although they have no need to eat or sleep – mindlessly walking, running or migrating as they did in life, largely oblivious to the world around them. Leave them alone and stay at least 100 feet (30.5 m) away, and they leave you alone. Prehistoric Ice Age mammals and dinosaurs only attack living animals, humans and D-Bees when disturbed, attacked first or if they were predators in life. When they attack, they chase, attack and try to kill their living prey or perceived enemy. Since these animated skeletons do not need to eat, however, they simply gore, butt or kick the enemy to death. Only predators bite and claw. When their perceived enemy or prey is dead, the skeleton walks away, leaving their victims where they lay. (**Note:** 50% chance that playing dead causes the skeleton to stop attacking and walk away.)

The creatures that have been reanimated all went extinct more than 12,000 years ago.

Undead Fossil Stats

Also Known As: Dinosaur Zombies, Rock Zombies, Walking Skeletons and Skells.

Alignment: Anarchist; mostly herbivores and herd animals.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4 (rudimentary, low animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+6, M.A. 1D4, P.S. Small 1D6 +8, Medium 1D6+12, Large 1D6+17, Giant 2D4+20 (Supernatural), P.P. 1D6+8, P.E. not applicable, P.B. Subjective (some people find them to be beautiful, others think they are horrific and terrifying), Spd running 30 to 44 maximum (20 to 30 mph/32 to 48 km) depending on the size and type of animal.

M.D.C. by Size and Type:

Small, Fox-size – 1D6x10 M.D.C.

Medium, Wolf to Deer-sized – 1D6x10+50 M.D.C.

Large, Horse and Moose to Elephant-sized – 2D6x10+100 M.D.C.

Giant, bigger than an Elephant, such as the Woolly Mammoth, allosaurus, T-Rex, stegosaurus and larger – 3D6x10+200 M.D.C.

M.D.C. Note: Add 1D6x10 M.D.C. to predators regardless of size.

Add 2D6x10 M.D.C. to creatures with armor.

Horror Factor: 14

Size: Varies.

Weight: 200 pounds (90 kg) to 15 tons.

Average Life Span: Unknown. Not alive! Until destroyed?

P.P.E.: 1D4x10, radiate with magic energy, but the P.P.E. cannot be syphoned. The skeleton is not alive, but perhaps whatever is animating the fossil is. Destroy the fossil and you break the Entity's (?) link to this reality and the fossil becomes just a pile of broken stone or bones.

Disposition: Generally docile. Endlessly wandering the ash plains as lone animals, pairs, small family groups (2D4) or small herds (4D6 members; sometimes more). Only predators are aggressive.

Equivalent Skill Abilities: None.

Natural Abilities: The most basic physical abilities that they had in life, such as walking, running, leaping, climbing, swimming, clawing, biting, etc.). **Note:** Skeleton birds cannot fly and fossil fish cannot swim, but rather they scurry along the floor of the river or lake.

Attacks per Melee: 2 for grazing animals, 3 for predators.

Mega-Damage: Varies with the animal, typically attack via horns, antlers, kick, claws, or bite as per Supernatural P.S.; typically 2D6 M.D. or 3D6 M.D. Supernatural P.S. plus 1D6 M.D. from the natural weapon.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): Herbivores: +1 to strike and dodge, impervious to psionic attack, poison, and disease, +3 vs Horror Factor.

Predators: +2 to strike, parry and dodge, impervious to psionic attack, poison, disease and Horror Factor.

Vulnerabilities: Vulnerable to all Mega-Damage weapons and attacks.

Habitat: Southwestern Nebraska, southeast Wyoming and around the Ashfall Fossil Beds State Park and Agate Fossil Beds National Monument areas of Nebraska.

Enemies: None, per se. The Whispering Fields just let them pass through.

Allies: Just their family units, herds or packs as they had in life.

Value: None, cannot be tamed or domesticated.

The Whispering Field

Whispering Fields are an oasis of grain crops in the middle of nowhere. Often in desolate, inhospitable environments where they should not be able to grow. The Whispering Field of edible crops grows in any environment, even ash fields, sand, desert, among rocks, city ruins, snow and ice, and in any climate regardless of weather. Moreover, the crops stay viable and can be harvested every 45 days.

Such a field of corn or wild grain is a godsend for starving survivors, especially during the Long Winter that follows the Coming of the Rifts. Moreover, the temperature is never less than 55 degrees Fahrenheit (12.7 C) in the field, and the lush colors of living plants seems to immediately restore hope and creates a sense of excitement follow by blissful comfort. People find it pleasant to camp inside these crop fields for days at a time. And the plants always seem to be ready for harvesting whenever a Whispering Field is found.

Whispering Field crops are always limited to one or two of the following: *corn/maize*, *wheat*, *oats*, *rice*, or *sorghum*. (**Note:** Sorghum can be used like corn to feed chickens, pigs and livestock, as well as turned into a gluten-free flour to make cereal and breads, sweet syrup, and even into ethanol. It became a money crop by 2036 in the States of Nebraska, Kansas and Texas.) Grain crops can be

used to make a variety of foods for both humans and livestock, and have been a staple for human life since before recorded history. To find a field of one or two of these crop plants in the frigid, ash buried world of Chaos Earth is a miracle.

People assume it is a welcomed dimensional anomaly (there are plenty of those after the Coming of the Rifts). Except these fields are something much more nefarious. Whispering Fields are the creation of some sort of powerful Entity or, perhaps, a lesser Alien Intelligence or energy being that is normally invisible. It is linked to the crops which anchors it to this world and reality. Destroy the crops and the creature vanishes back to its natural plane of existence. Only nothing is that simple.

When people stumble upon a Whispering Field, not only are they excited to have found a miraculous source of food, but they feel drawn to it. Of the witnesses who survive such an encounter, they report that as they stand near the edge of the field, they can hear an unintelligible whispering coming from the field. They assume it to be the wind playing a trick on the ears – there is always a mild breeze blowing in a Whispering Field, as if it were breathing. The breeze and the whispering feel comforting. Welcoming. Calling them and somehow not odd at all.

Those who step into the inviting Whispering Field seldom come back out. As they revel in the lush beauty, the sweet smells and promise of food and plenty, they relax their guard; probably for the first time in weeks or months. Some weep with joy. Most sit down for a moment to drink it all in and find themselves zoning out into a calm, meditative state, or drifting off to sleep as if enjoying a nice spring or autumn afternoon. Others pick a bushel or two of the crops before stopping to rest, and let themselves drift off into the oasis of green calm amidst the raging chaos.

It is a quiet, gentle way to *die*.

When people drift into slumber inside the field, they enjoy sweet dreams as their life force is slowly drained away. In this trance-like slumber, the Entity skims their thoughts and emotions, savoring them like the frosting on a cake as it feeds, first upon their P.P.E. and/or I.S.P., and then upon their life energy (Hit Points). Stealing from them 20% of their life essence each day. Finally, 2D6 hours after the fifth day, the person or people peacefully die, and the Whispering Field is full and content ... for the moment.

Whether one person or 20, the Whispering Field drains them all simultaneously at the same amount. The Whispering Field can, if it must, survive indefinitely on animal life forms, but much prefers delicious humanoids and other sentient beings.

Once people succumb to the Whispering Field, they can only be awakened by being dragged out of the crop field or awakened by the Entity itself. The latter happens when the Entity realizes that the person(s) is part of a much larger group. If one of the victims is a member of survivor community of least 50 people (hundreds or thousands is even better!), the Whispering Field offers its victims an opportunity to live and to feed their entire community.

It communicates to sentient beings via dreams in which it usually appears as a beautiful maiden or handsome male with golden skin, golden eyes and long, flowing brown hair. In the dream, the hair is literally flowing, even if there is no wind. The god-like being appears as an idealized version of the same species it is addressing and, in the dream, hovers and floats 1-4 feet (0.3 to 1.2 m) above the ground. It speaks their language and seems warm and kind, almost maternal, and it is willing to make a deal for mutual survival. Protect its crops and let it "touch" you and your people's essence, and it will let you and them share in the bounty of its crops. For generations.

There is one other, small matter. The pact maker and all the people of the community must visit the Whispering Field throughout

the week, or en masse a couple times a week, to let it “touch” them. “The Sharing,” as it is called, is a euphemism for letting it feed upon them. Since this is a symbiotic relationship, the Whispering Field only tastes *a little piece* of each of them every feeding, twice a week. A mere 1D4 Hit Points and 1D6 P.P.E. or I.S.P. is taken. So little that it is barely noticed by most people. After a group visit to the field, the people simply feel a little tired or may have a slight headache or bit of nausea that lasts only 6D6 minutes before it is forgotten. A tiny, insignificant price to pay for precious food in a desolate and dangerous world, especially when the experience of it is so calm and peaceful.

It will, if you let it, slay invaders and enemies, as above. All you have to do is bring them to it, and bury their desiccated corpses away from its field, after it has gorged itself on their life essence.

Once the Whispering Field has made a deal with a community, it expects them to keep it, forever. It will not let them ever be free of it. During The Sharing, the Whispering Field reads surface thoughts and emotions, so it will know if the people are thinking of breaking the deal and take the necessary action to prevent it by keeping and killing the troublemakers who want to put an end to their pact.

Like a Tectonic Entity, the force behind the Whispering Field can temporarily manifest a physical body composed of plant matter or locusts/grasshoppers or crickets. In physical form it can fight and inflict Mega-Damage even though its body is made of S.D.C. material. Destroying the physical body does not kill the Entity, but it does render it helpless for the next 48 hours. Utterly destroy the Whispering Field and you destroy it, sending the Entity back to wherever it comes from.

Burn down the field and all of its crops – keeping nothing, not even a seed or kernel of corn – and you destroy its link to this world, and the creature vanishes from this reality. However, you cannot leave one plant standing or it will return, regrowing the Whispering Field within 3D4 months. And when it has grown large enough to again, whisper, it will be very hungry.

During the first century of the *Two Hundred Years Dark Age*, this type of symbiotic relationship can be a life saver. However, as the environment calms down and other, more conventional means of growing crops and making food return, such pacts are no longer necessary.

Whispering Field Stats for Physical Manifestation

The Crop Field is Also Known As: Miracle Crops, Demon Fields, Hell Crops, Fade Corn, and Sorrow Wheat.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes in Physical Form: I.Q. 1D6+13, M.E. 2D6+13, M.A. 2D6+13, P.S. 2D6+13 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+13, P.E. 1D6+13 (Supernatural), P.B. 1D6, Spd 2D6+13.

M.D.C.: 2D6x10+130 (+130 M.D.C. per every 100 people it shares a symbiotic bound with).

Horror Factor: None as the Whispering Field, because it looks innocent and inviting, and because most people do not know about its deadly supernatural powers. H.F. 14 in its physical manifestation, +2 if made of bugs.

Size of the Whispering Field: 1D4+2 acres, +10 acres per every 100 people with whom it is bound.

Size in Physical Manifestation: 6-7 feet (1.8 to 2.1 m) tall.

Weight: 300 pounds (135 kg) in physical form.

Average Lifespan of Whispering Field: Unknown, presumably until it is completely destroyed by fire.

P.P.E.: 4D6x10 is its permanent base. A large portion of the P.P.E. consumed from the living is eaten by the Entity, the rest is used to grow and keep its crops alive in harsh environments.

I.S.P.: 3D6x10+60. Also see psionics.

Disposition: A calm, quiet, silent killer. Forces behind the Whispering Fields are usually focused on getting enough to eat to survive by draining the life from one or a few people at a time. A Whispering Field that is starving will be half the usual size. The creature responsible is happy to form a symbiotic relationship and alliances with any group willing to tend to the field and let it feed upon their life energy. Those who make a pact with the thing that is a Whispering Field are seldom drained enough to kill them, unless the Field detects they are thinking about abandoning or destroying it. Then it keeps the ring-leaders of such plans asleep and drains the life out of them over the next 5 days. If necessary, it will take physical form to kill them in the moment and/or to frighten the people and keep them subservient.

Equivalent Skill Abilities: None.

Natural Abilities: In physical form, the Whispering Field physical manifestation can leave the field, but seldom travels more than 2,000 feet (610 m) away, and never more than an hour away, in case the field falls under attack. Damage it may suffer away from the field cannot be restored until it returns the crop field, then it Bio-Regenerates 2D6 M.D.C. per melee round. The physical form can be maintained indefinitely, but the creature’s natural form is some form of invisible energy, so it abandons the physical body as soon as it is no-longer necessary. Remember, killing the body only frees the force inside it. You must destroy the crops and the field via fire, to sent the force responsible back to its natural realm.

Attacks per Melee (in Physical Form): Five attacks in physical form. May use weapons or psionics to attack.

Bonuses: Impervious to poison, cold, normal heat, and possession, +5 to save vs Psionic attacks.

Vulnerabilities: Vulnerable to fire; does double damage to physical manifestation and to the crop field. Ordinary fire does equivalent M.D.C. damage to it.

Magic: All used to create, grow and maintain the crops of the Whispering Field.

Psionics: Empathy (4), Group Trance (15), Presence Sense (4), Remote Viewing (10, limited to within the Whispering Field, never beyond it), Sense Magic (3), Sense Time (2), and Telepathy (4; to skim their thoughts and communicate in physical form). Plus the special abilities to whisper and call people who come within 500 feet (152 m) of the crop field, the power to calm and sedate people, put them into a trance-like slumber and to communicate via dreams. Feeding on their magical, psychic and life energy is a natural ability as described earlier.

Combat psionics available in physical form only: Bio-Manipulation (varies), Empathic Transmission (varies), Intuitive Combat (10), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Radiate Horror Factor (8; H.F. 15 and can be applied to the body and/or the entire field which suddenly seems frightening), Telekinesis (varies), Telekinetic Punch (6), and Telekinetic Push (4). **I.S.P.:** 3D6x10+60.

Habitat: Nebraska, Wyoming, the Dakotas and all the northwestern states and plain states of the United States as well as southwestern Canada.

Enemies: Any creature it can feed on.

Allies: Those who are willing to make a pact with it, feed it with their P.P.E. and life essences are protected by the Whispering Field.

Value: None to priceless depending on one’s point of view.



RIFTS®

- Imagine Earth transformed into an alien landscape.
- Humans exist – barely. And we are not alone.
- Aliens and monsters emerge from the Rifts – holes torn in the fabric of space and time, connected to countless worlds and realities.
- Ancient gods, demons and magic have returned.
- Magic and technology clash.
- Hundreds of character classes, many inhuman.
- *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* is the core RPG rule book.
- Expansive world setting with 90+ sourcebooks to draw upon.
- *Rifts®*, your portal to endless adventure.
- Limited only by your imagination.

www.palladiumbooks.com

© 2014 Palladium Books. *Rifts®*, *Megaverse®*, *Nightbane®* and other titles, slogans and likenesses are trademarks of Palladium Books, Inc. Palladium Books - 39074 Webb Court, Westland, MI 48185 USA - 734-271-2903 order line.

Other RPG Worlds from Palladium Books®:

- *Rifts®* – the ultimate role-playing experience.
- *Rifts® Chaos Earth®* – Play the apocalypse as it happens.
- *Splicers®* – Weird science. Bio-tech battles insane robot legions.
- *Dead Reign® RPG* – Can you survive the Zombie Apocalypse?
- *Palladium Fantasy RPG®* – Unique world, monsters as player characters, magic and more.
- *Heroes Unlimited™ RPG* – Play any hero; mutants, aliens, cyborgs, superhumans, mages, immortals and more.
- *Nightbane® RPG* – Conspiracy, magic, horror and monsters.
- *Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG* – Modern horror and suspense.
- *Ninjas and Superspies™*, and more.

Can YOU survive the Zombie Apocalypse?



The Dead Reign® RPG series

Dead Reign® RPG – “Core Rules.” It is the aftermath of the *zombie apocalypse*. The dead reign and the living fight against impossible odds. Can you survive? Find out with this fast-paced horror game. Easy to learn. Fast character creation and combat.

- **Zombie combat and survival rules, vehicles and equipment.**
- **6 iconic Character Classes plus Ordinary People (40+ occupations).**
- **7 types of zombies, plus the Half-Living.**
- **101 Random Scenarios, Encounters, Settings and other tables.**
- **\$26.99 retail – 224 pages – Cat. No. 230. Available now.**

Civilization Gone™ Sourcebook

Civilization has crumbled to nothing. There is no army. No government. No help coming. What now?

- **Madmen, Psychopaths, villains, heroes and protectors.**
- **House, home and survivor camp tables, resources & encounters.**
- **\$14.99 retail – 64 pages – Cat. No. 231. Available now.**

Dark Places™ Sourcebook

Travel the rails and urban underground to move about undetected by zombies.

- **Worm Meat, Bug Boy, Sewer Crawler & Impersonator Zombies.**
- **Traveling the rails, sewers and other dark places.**
- **Random encounter tables, boxcar content tables, and much more.**
- **\$12.95 retail – 64 pages – Cat. No. 232. Available now.**

Endless Dead™ Sourcebook

The zombies grow in number and strangeness. Can humankind survive?

- **Zombie amalgamations, tables and encounters.**
- **New player characters & timetables for your campaign.**
- **Weaponizing vehicles, vehicle combat rules, and military bases.**
- **Creating survivor caravans, hideouts, Safe Havens & more.**
- **\$16.95 retail – 96 pages – Cat. No. 233. Available now.**

Other horror titles from Palladium Books®

Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG **Nightbane® RPG**

© Copyright 2017 Palladium Books Inc. All rights reserved. Rifts®, Palladium Books®, Megaverse®, Nightbane®, Dead Reign®, Heroes Unlimited and other published book titles, names, slogans and likenesses are trademarks of Palladium Books Inc.

www.palladiumbooks.com

Fear the Reaper™ Sourcebook

Heroes who, like knights of old, travel the highways fighting zombies and helping survivors.

- **Comprehensive background on the Road Reapers.**
- **Their code, missions, weapons, strategies and tactics.**
- **The Terror Zombie and more.**
- **\$12.95 retail – 48 pages – Cat. No. 234. Available now.**

Graveyard Earth™ Sourcebook

The Zombie Apocalypse across the globe; provides a world overview and many adventure ideas.

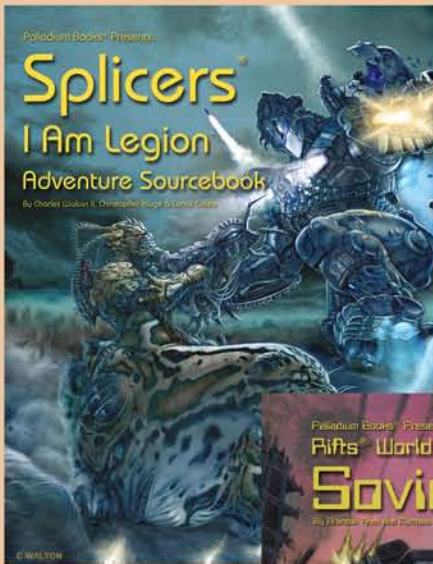
- **Many tables for settings, encounters and adventure hooks.**
- **Random Safe Havens by region, and Survivor Leaders.**
- **How to get home from abroad, zombie threat levels & more.**
- **\$12.95 retail – 64 pages – Cat. No. 235. Available now.**

Hell Followed™ Sourcebook

This big, 160 page sourcebook begins to redefine the zombie genre. It broadens the field of possibilities and expands upon the modern zombie mythos. It is full of twists and surprises you will not expect.

- **11 new types of terrifying zombies.**
- **7 player characters, plus Masked Lunatics – heroes or madmen?**
- **21 disasters to complicate survival, and urban survival.**
- **Government enclaves, conspiracy theories and more.**
- **\$20.95 retail – 160 pages – Cat. No. 236. Available now.**





New from Palladium Books®

Splicers®: I Am Legion™ Sourcebook

This adventure sourcebook for **Splicers®** is jam-packed with new Host Armors, War Mounts, Bio-Enhancements and adventure galore. Can you stop Legion? Collects the adventure source material from **The Rifter®** issues #71-78.

- 6 new Great Houses, 4 Host Armors, 6 War Mounts.
- 7 new Bio-Enhancements and augmentation, 19 new Bio-Weapons.
- 15 new machines, Amalgam creation tables, and more.
- Legion: A new and psychotic personality of N.E.X.U.S.
- An epic series of adventures, plus adventure ideas and more.
- Written by Chuck Walton II, Christopher Kluge, Lance Colley and others.
- 256 pages – by Walton, Kluge & Colley – Cat. No. 201.

Rifts®: Sovietski™

Everything you could want to know about the Sovietski as it faces rival Warlords of Russia and monstrous invaders. Notable places, new O.C.C.s, new D-Bees, new cyborgs, new bionics, new weapons and more.

- The Sovietski nation and notable cities.
- New cyborgs, power armor, tanks and vehicles, weapons and gear.
- New Russian O.C.C.s, D-Bees, adventure ideas and more.
- 224 pages – by Aten and Orr – Cat. No. 891.

Coming: Rifts® Bestiary™, Volume One

Beasts and monsters of North America collected into a pair of reference guides. Each creature illustrated and described with a map showing where it can be found.

- Monsters and animals of Rifts North America.
- Some new creatures. Updated information where applicable.
- Updated and uniform stat blocks and maps.
- 192 pages (or more) – Cat. No. 896 & 897.
- Volume Two to be released soon after Vol. One.

One Game System – A Megaverse® of Adventure™



The Rifter® Number Eighty

This **Rifter®** is all about new ideas, pushing the envelope, trying new things and alternative methods, rules and approaches to create epic adventure! Role-playing games (and **The Rifter®**) are all about expressions of *your* imagination. Of making ideas, characters and stories come to life. RPGs are flexible. Malleable. Alive and changing. There is no one way to look at things. Open your mind to the infinite possibilities. This issue of **The Rifter®** presents new settings and people, monsters, villains, heroes, the whimsical and the bizarre to expand your worlds of adventure.

Rifter® #80 Highlights:

- **Palladium Fantasy RPG® – Wayfarers™** by Julius Rosenstein & Kevin Siembieda. These rogues travel the world in caravans, robbing, beguiling and trading with everyone, from the monster races to humans. They arrive with entertainers, Seers, Psi-Healers, exotic trade goods, rumors, and news. They also bring thieves, con artists and vagabonds, all happy to rob people blind. You will never think of thieves the same way after you read the *Swapper's Code*, the *Wayfarer Thief* and *Wizard-Thief*. Any Wayfarer O.C.C. adds spice to your adventurer group and can be encountered anywhere as an NPC villain. “Official” source material.
- **Splicers® – House of the Red Sands** by Kris Tipping & Charles Walton II. An epic new setting and new Splicers House and their unique, new Host Armors, War Mounts, Desert Rose, bio-engineered ants, other creations and plenty of adventure ideas. “Official” source material.
- **Heroes Unlimited™ – Masters Unlimited™**, by Paul Herbert. An insidious new villainous organization, notable super-villains and adventure ideas galore.
- **Rifts® Chaos Earth® – Nebraska** by Daniel Frederick, Megan Timperley & Kevin Siembieda. The chaos of the Great Cataclysm is different around the globe. This source material examines the events and survivors of Nebraska, and some of the weird monsters and people survivors must deal with. Part One of two. “Official” source material.
- News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.
- 112 pages of new settings, characters and adventure waiting for you.

\$14.99

Cat. No. 180

ISBN-10: 1-57457-258-X

ISBN-13: 978-1-57457-258-2

Unleash your imagination™

**Palladium
Books Inc.**

www.palladiumbooks.com